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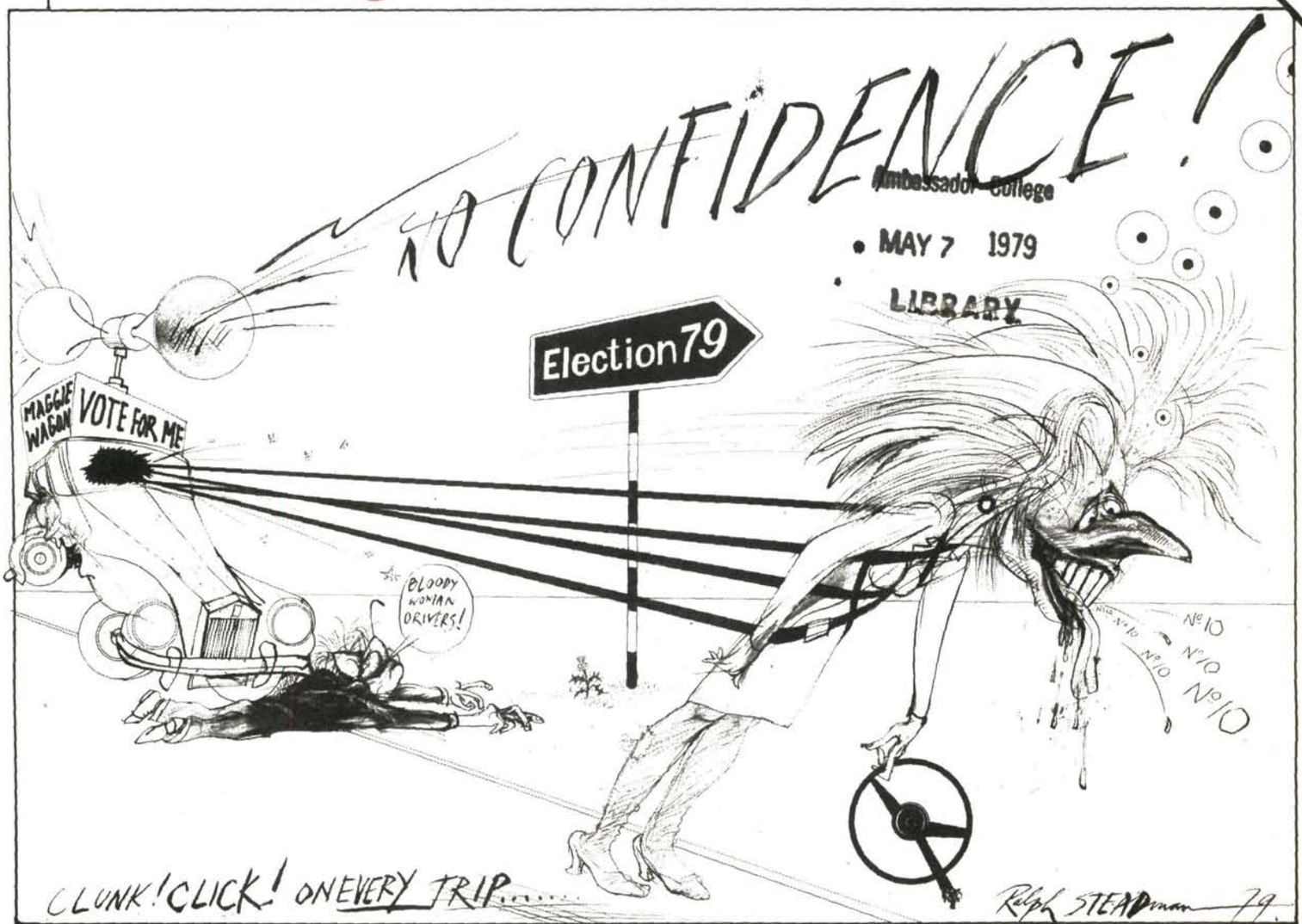
NEW STATESM

Union corruption: the NATSOPA scandals

Read the play the BBC banned SOLID GEOMETRY

This time –



something's got to give

LABOUR'S COLLAPSE in the Commons was not a misfortune of Parliamentary arithmetic, nor did it result – as Michael Foot would have it – from 'lack of a working majority'. Labour did enjoy, until quite recently, a strategic majority in the House, and the truth is that Callaghan and Foot destroyed it because in the end the purposelessness of their regime became apparent to everyone. That, sadly, would have been just as true even if they had scraped together a fortuitous victory on Wednesday night. What we now must do is count the cost: estimate, that is, the risk of our state being handed over, not so much to conservatism, as to outright reaction and fantasy. And remarkably enough, calculations suggest that the game can still be won.

There has been no defeat for socialism, or for the ideas of radical reform. What we are seeing is the end of a style of government, at once authoritarian, patronising and cynical, in which everything can be sacrificed for the aim of staying in office – resulting, as it must do, in an administration which has no value except to the place-men it sustains.

Four major electoral elements now threaten to drive Labour into opposition. They are: Labour abstention *en masse*; the collapse of the Liberal vote back to the Tories; the possibility of a Tory revival in Scotland at the expense of the SNP; and the emergence of a Parliamentary pact between Mrs Thatcher and the Orangemen. In different ways, all four of these disabilities result from the worldly-wise manoeuvres of the Callaghan-Foot regime. They have done the near-impossible by alienating both sides of the Ulster membership. They have angered the Scots and been repudiated by the Welsh. They have compromised the Liberals without satisfying the Tories. Finally, they have treated the claims of the Labour movement and its working-class supporters as if they were distant complaints of some obscure colony with no strategic value.

James Callaghan never laid any claim to intellect, and his supporters have at times seemed to glory in the poverty of his performance as Chancellor, Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary – as if this showed all the more clearly how little these things count beside the real business of wheeler-dealing and party-managing. It was thought priggish to point ▶

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(continued from overleaf)
out that the Labour Party might come to grief under the leadership of a man who seems genuinely puzzled at the idea that political principles might be anything more than bargaining-counters. Yet even the hardiest cynics must find it embarrassing when, as in the past few days, the politics of the pork-barrel are conducted with such pathetic lack of discrimination as to make them auto-destructive. One might leave aside, in the case of the desperate offer to the Welsh Nationalists – whereby it was suddenly discovered that the claims of crippled quarrymen might not be too expensive after all – the question of whether the lives of working-people should be chaffered-over in quite so shameless a way. It was, in any case, the work of a moment for the Tory spokesman to saunter across the Chamber and match the Labour offer.

If Callaghan were to ask Roy Mason to resign in order to secure the Irish votes, that at least would be a deal (and one which might have beneficial results in Ireland). But changing course on a failed policy is just what the Prime Minister will not do. Everything is negotiable, nothing is sacred – except the men and measures responsible for the disaster. At the heart of the matter has been the surrender to Treasury incompetence over economic policy, leading to mass unemployment and de-industrialisation: the laying-waste, not just of Labour's electoral fortunes, but of the whole skilled working-class and the basis on which our national future depends. But one orthodoxy leads to another, and one surrender to another retreat. It is not only among socialists that there has been despair over Britain's witless apeing of American foreign policy, or the bullying of the lower-paid, or the state-sponsored attack on civil liberties, or the utter lack of seriousness about minority rights. Voters and activists are not lost on economics alone, and if Labour is to present itself as the party of even marginal change, then it cannot afford to be as brutal as it has been with the libertarian and critical elements of our society. Reform here could have come within the existing balance of power in the Commons – whatever Mr Foot says. It could also have come without upsetting our overseas creditors, or reducing the incentive for capital to invest in British industry. It did not happen because the Government did not want it to.

FOR ALL THESE reasons, the coalition of socialists, radical reformers and working-class interest-groups – which must be assembled to make a Labour victory – is strained and unhappy. Yet the obvious discomfiture of the Left should not be allowed to obscure the fact that there are strains and tensions on the other side which are potentially explosive. It is only a slight over-simplification to say that James Prior and Margaret Thatcher appeal to very different elements in the Tory coalition: on the one hand, the essentially cautious owners of society, whose ambition is merely to delay the arrival of the future, and on the other hand those fierce and disappointed people who wish to compel the return of a golden age which never existed outside their own imaginations. This is a fragile combination, which has achieved only one electoral victory since 1959: the consequence of yet another defeat might well be disintegration. Mrs Thatcher's fans in Fleet Street and elsewhere will fight with desperate savagery, knowing that if their campaign fails the CBI wing of the party will want no more truck with her or Sir Keith Joseph, and that knives will be produced with the Tories' usual lack of ceremony.

And it is, of course, the special achievement of Callaghanism to have given reaction this brief opportunity – for any normally competent Labour government, with a reasonably-united Labour movement behind it, ought to be able to wipe the floor with a candidate like Thatcher. That said, the task she faces is a formidable one, for the electoral geography of Britain – partly through the Tories' own fault – is not particularly favourable to the party she leads.

Briefly, the Tories have become a party whose strength is concentrated south of the line which runs from the Wash to the Severn, and a party of the suburbs with less and less of a base in Britain's industrial periphery. (Not for nothing was Mr Prior to be heard the other day urging the Tories to rebuild their links with the manual workers, whose dissatisfaction with Labour has yet to be turned into outright disloyalty.) Electorally, this turns into a disadvantage in that outside the marginal belts of the south-eastern cities – where Labour seats will topple to a modest swing – the Tories find themselves confronting formidable Labour citadels, which they cannot hope to win unless they achieve a lead beyond the sort we usually witness in a British general election.

Such estimates may seem surprising, but it will be possible to spell them out with greater clarity as the campaign develops. On a preliminary calculation, the Tories will need to have an opinion-poll lead of something between six and seven per cent on the morning of election-day, if they are to be confident of a 20-seat overall majority. Anything much less will make it difficult, perhaps impossible, for them to break out of their south-eastern prison. At the moment, of course, they have all that lead and more – but not even Mrs Thatcher's most hopeful henchmen can hope to keep it all throughout a hard-fought campaign. The sad disarray of Mr Callaghan's administration makes it difficult indeed to calculate realistically that Labour can win. But that is not the same thing as accepting the inevitability of a Tory victory of dimensions that would actually make it possible to turn our economy and society into an adventure-playground for Sir Keith Joseph and Sir Geoffrey Howe. (Fantasies of their sort will not survive minority government, by-election failure, and the sad discovery that money-supply equations have nothing to say about the mechanism of industrial decay.)

It is often said that British politics are never decisive, and that this is a country where nothing changes. But it is reasonable to believe that the long, post-war crisis of British society is now coming to a head. In the election of 1979, one or other of the two great coalitions is likely to suffer major – and decisive – defeat, however blurred the immediate result appears to be. Mr Callaghan's leadership could hardly have done more to disintegrate the coalition of the Left. But if it can survive, it may find that the world has changed around it.

NOTES

Dangerous days for Teng Hsiao-ping

Anthony Barnett writes: Having failed with their attack on Vietnam, China's leaders are now returning to their more traditional activity of fighting each other. The signals are far more confused than from any papal conclave, but plenty of smoke is pouring out of Peking chimneys.

There were almost certainly disagreements over the war itself. Chairman Hua's only noticeable move was to declare that the withdrawal had been completed; he had never made an equivalent effort to endorse its purpose. As the withdrawal began, at the beginning of March, Hua's over-ambitious plans for the country's much needed economic modernisation were toned down: the architect of this modernisation is apparently Chen Yun, the new Party Vice-Chairman appointed in December. But he may not be a supporter of Teng Hsiao-ping either – indeed some reports suggest that he has clashed quite sharply with Teng, and attacked his style of work. His 'centrist' or moderate themes have also been joined by more 'leftist' ones, attacking the exaggerated stress on the bonus system which Teng introduced.

The Cultural Revolution and its leading victim Lui Shao-chi are another issue of dispute. Lui's wife has now been rehabilitated and a recent poster apparently demanded his own return from ideological purgatory. Hua has been criticised for omitting a reference to 'Comrade' Lui Shao-chi from the latest volume of Mao's writings, which were published posthumously and which Hua nominally edited. The two most irreconcilable opponents in China's leadership, Wang Tung-hsing (once Mao's bodyguard) and Teng himself, have staked out incompatible assessments of Lui and therefore of the whole of China's last decade.

This may be where Chen Yun comes in. He was Peking's number five in the middle 1950s (ranked above Teng) and was the economic supremo of the People's Republic's extremely successful first decade. He was ousted, however, at the time of the 'Great Leap Forward', at the end of the Fifties, and was thus not directly involved in the later struggles of the Cultural Revolution. *Le Monde* has suggested that Chen Yun is an ally of Marshal Yeh Chien-ying (who, along with Wang, arrested the Gang of Four); like Yeh, Chen is an ageing stalwart from the Party's heroic period. Chen is also one of the few proletarians in the leadership – he was once a printing worker from Shanghai. It is not inconceivable that a bloc is emerging that is hostile to both Teng and Wang, one which regards their dispute as disabling for the country's organisation and the victory of either as a menace.

When he launched his main attack on Wang last November, Teng allowed a wall poster campaign that soon took up the theme of human rights. This move to greater democracy won him genuine support among large sections of Peking. In a recent speech, however, Teng attacked posters that went too far, and in particular singled out ones that appealed to President Carter. Only two months ago Teng easily held the initiative over his colleagues, and he may still be sufficiently strong to win a show-down and completely consolidate his individual supremacy. But he may be pushed into making such a bid prematurely, and Chen Yun will be ready to pounce. The figure selected by *Time* as their Man Of The Year may not last the next twelve months.

Tenants fork out

Andrew Arden writes: Security of tenure for council tenants, as proposed by the new Housing Bill, has won the support of all political parties. For the Tories, this represents a major *volte face,* since they must now recognise council housing as a permanent source of accommodation, not (as they have long wished it to be) a temporary welfare provision.

Anyone who is mystified by such a change of

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heart may find an explanation in one of the related provisions of the Bill. This gives council tenants a statutory right to carry out improvements to their homes, provided they get permission from the local authority – and this, says the Bill, is not to be withheld unreasonably. Council tenants will also gain access to the same kind of improvement grants currently available to owner-occupiers.

The idea is that tenants will now start to bear part of the cost of improving local authority housing stock, particularly in the dilapidated inner cities. Improvement grants run from 75 per cent in Housing Action Areas and 60 per cent in General Improvement Areas, to 50 per cent elsewhere. So not only will tenants have to contribute between 50 and 25 per cent of the cost, but they will also have to oversee the execution of work themselves – another considerable saving to the state.

Improvement grants extend only to a proportion of an eligible expense limit (around £5,000 in some cases) and the occupier must pay 100 per cent of any cost over that limit. As a condition of the grant, the local authority can require extra work to be carried out, beyond what the occupier wants or thinks necessary. As a result, anyone who embarks on home improvement with a local authority grant can end up having to foot bills running into thousands of pounds.

Owner occupiers can try to raise additional mortgages. But how will the tenants find the cash? Mortgages are not available where the only interest in the property is a periodic tenancy. Perhaps some authorities will advance loans. If they don't, tenants without renewal-minded bank managers will be forced to turn to fringe financial institutions, some of which charge up to 28 per cent compound interest. This could lead to financial hardship, debts and rent arrears. Where there is unemployment or dependency on supplementary benefit, a bleak picture emerges that is reminiscent of the insecurities of working class tenants in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Though the Housing Bill introduces security of tenure, rent arrears will be a ground for possession. So, too, will improvements carried out without proper consent, since they will breach a condition of the tenancy. There are other grounds for possession, moreover, which will enable the authority to evict tenants, or possibly transfer them to alternative accommodation, and then re-let the improved property at an increased rent.

In a consultation paper which preceded the Bill, it seemed likely that if tenants left, whether voluntarily or not, they would be reimbursed on a valuation of the improvement. Since then, however, the government has changed its mind. Under the terms of the Bill, authorities will not be obliged to reimburse the tenants, although they will have a discretionary power to do so. It is a deliberate part of the proposals that incoming tenants should be charged a rent which reflects the improved value of the property. But outgoing tenants will have no absolute right to compensation, no matter for how short a time they have had the benefit of their investments. It is worth recalling what the Department of the Environment said when considering (and rejecting) the idea of grants for private tenants: 'The carrying out of improvement with the aid of tenant grant could provide the landlord with an incentive to repossess.'

An anarchist behind bars

David Clark writes: Ronan Bennett, the 23-year-old anarchist arrested last May at the start of the investigation into an alleged conspiracy to cause explosions, was again refused bail last Friday. Bennett, who has spent most of the 10 months since his arrest as a Category A top security prisoner, has now been refused bail four times.

Six anarchists were arrested and charged with conspiracy last summer: four of them, some with serious previous convictions, have since been released on bail, while the sixth, Stewart Carr, has not applied for bail and intends to plead guilty when the trial eventually opens on 3 September. The Attorney-General turned down the original explosions charges, which have now been modified to 'conspiracy to rob'.

Bennett's mother, to whom he is very close, has offered to put her house on the market as a surety for him. His co-defendant Iris Mills has offered stable accommodation with her mother. A job is available and there are plenty of other sureties. Yet his bail application was turned down again, ensuring that even if he's found not guilty next September he will have spent 15 months in prison, a period for which he is not entitled to any compensation.

Are the pips squeaking?

Frank Field writes: Quietly tucked away at the back of the current *Economic Trends* (HMSO £2.10) is information which gives the lie to so much Tory propaganda about the crippling rates of taxation on the rich. The marginal rates on earned income – which the Tories tend to stress – do not, in any case, bear out the charge: only on taxable incomes of over £8,000 do the higher tax rates come into play, and the 83 per cent rate is only levied on taxable income of over £24,000 a year. But even these figures grossly overestimated the burden of taxation – and particularly on higher income groups.

Over a number of years *Economic Trends* has presented the average rate of tax paid on pre-tax income. Since last year these data have also taken

into account the granting of what are known as non-structural tax reliefs – such as mortgage interest repayments – which drastically reduce the marginal rate paid by higher income groups. For example, the richest 1 per cent pays only 45.4 per cent of its income in direct tax. The next richest 9 per cent of the population pays only 25.2 per cent of its total income in tax once tax reliefs are taken into account.

It is not surprising, then, that the survey shows how unequal the distribution of income in this country continues to be. The top 5 per cent in the income pile command 16.3 per cent of incomes before tax and still control 13.5 per cent after tax. Even less affected by the supposedly draconian redistribution of our present tax system is the share going to the richest 2-10 per cent: before tax this group amasses 20.7 per cent of income, and it manages to retain 19.3 per cent after the Revenue has had its bite.

Spy in the sky

Brian Beckett writes: Recent revelations of British involvement in American U-2 and SR-71 spy plane operations only touch the surface. According to a source at the Defence Ministry, Britain has been involved in the U-2 programme from its very beginning, with a special communication line installed between the CIA in Washington and the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall. The line, devoted solely to U-2 operations in Europe, was withdrawn by the US in 1973 after the Prime Minister delayed giving permission for a U-2 mission from RAF Akrotiri during the first hours of the Middle East war: after that, U-2 communications were relayed via conventional channels.

Francis Gary Powers was apparently given a special briefing and tour of this communication facility a few days before his ill-fated flight over the USSR and – according to the source – may have had Britain as his final destination rather than Norway as is commonly believed. On average there is still about one spy flight every week leaving Britain or British territory, and each is coded 'poppy'. The Ministry has denied that British pilots are involved but informed sources disagree, describing how they are given special training in the US and are equipped with American uniforms and identification.

Since the advent of the reconnaissance satellite, the anti-Soviet role of the spy planes has been largely limited to the gathering of electronic intelligence along the Russian border, but British involvement has kept pace. A new communication line between Whitehall and Washington has been installed to deal exclusively with business from the Joint Air Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre (JARIC) – a combined British services operation based in Huntingdon – and activity has apparently undergone a tremendous increase over the past year. Whatever the overall status of the special relationship, it certainly isn't dead where the intelligence community is concerned.

Dublin's new uprising

Brian Trench writes from Dublin: The air was heavy with historical echoes in Dublin last week when nearly 150,000 took to the streets in protest against the tax burden on wage and salary earners. 'Dublin was glorious in 1913,' said Sam Nolan of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions, 'and Dublin is glorious in 1979. We are making history today.' It was the biggest show of trade union strength since Jim Larkin led demonstrations during the 1913 general strike. Hotels, shops and pubs were closed, as well as transport services, docks and factories. Large contingents of office workers, teachers and civil servants struck for half a day to join the march. Even the tax officers marched: they too have been demanding a radical overhaul of the tax system.

It may take more than a day of stoppages and demonstrations to make political history by forcing the Fianna Fail government to introduce a second budget and shift some significant part of the 87 per cent of income tax now being paid by employees on to companies, big farmers and the self-employed. 'We will not be intimidated,' warned Finance Minister George Colley. But, as many placards carried by the Dublin demonstrators recalled, he had been intimidated by the farmers' organisations. A much smaller demonstration in the Midlands town of Portlaoise six weeks earlier, along with pressure from government party deputies representing rural constituencies, had helped him change his mind on a 2 per cent sales levy proposed in the February budget.

Before the budget, the Dublin Council of Trade Unions had held a demonstration which was poorly attended and almost totally ignored by the media. But all eyes were on the Council when its executive proposed a stoppage and demonstration for 20 March.

Trade union conferences have long been condemning the heavy burden of taxation borne by those who contribute under the PAYE system. They have pointed not only to the tiny contribution by farmers (5.5 per cent of all farm incomes are paid in tax and rates, compared with an average of 16 per cent of employees' income paid in tax) but also to evasion by companies and the self-employed. Civil servants and leaders of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions have now set up a working party to discuss taxation, social welfare, pay policy and employment; they will be hard put to produce a deal which will quell trade unionists' anger.

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UNIONS
Christopher Hird and Patrick Wintour

How was Natsopa brought to the verge of bankruptcy?

Pensions, perks and the printers

The print union Natsopa is being enveloped by one of the biggest financial rows in the history of British trades unionism. A confidential and dispassionate accountants' report shows that the union is on the verge of bankruptcy and that its pension fund has been seriously mismanaged. For years the union has been run in an unbelievably ramshackle and informal way, producing annual reports which conceal as much as they reveal. Important decisions have been taken without proper authorisation of the union's executive. On occasion the funds of the union have been used to enrich the officers of the union instead of advancing the interests of its members.

Strenuous attempts are being made to suppress this information. On Tuesday, at the union's Governing Council meeting, the President prevented any immediate decision being taken on what to do about the disturbing revelations in the accountant's report, but lawyers are being asked to consider whether any civil action should be taken. That the story emerges at all owes much to the tenacity of Natsopa members at the *Observer* newspaper who have used the genuinely democratic rule book of Natsopa – written by the union's founders in the 1890s – to force open the books within less than a year.

Rumours of financial irregularity have been circulating within Natsopa for years. As far back as 1973 the then general secretary Lord Briginshaw denounced such rumours as 'vindictive and anti-socialist attacks' organised by Trotskyists. Critics were persistently silenced by appeals to union loyalty. But by 1976 the loyalty of Natsopa members in the *Observer* machine room was wearing a bit thin: they felt that union officers had helped the management make cuts of a fifth in manning levels. Their earlier attempts to get the salaries of national officers publicised had been resisted by the new general secretary, Mr Owen O'Brien, who took over in 1975.

The *Observer* chapel's concern increased early in 1978 when rumours started circulating that merger talks with the National Graphical Association had broken down because of the weak financial position of Natsopa. These talks, which had been going on for two years were recognised as the first move to one union in the print industry. The NGA knew that the Natsopa staff pension fund showed a deficit of £781,000. This was partly because over a quarter of the assets were invested in cheap mortgages to union officers and almost a seventh of the assets were in non-income producing properties.

Despite O'Brien's assurance that there was nothing in the rumours, details of the pension fund's position started leaking out and in April O'Brien seemed to confirm that there was something in them: he asked all members for a 10p a week special levy to bring the assets of the union up to the level laid down in its rule book. The *Observer* chapel decided to act: its FOC, Mr Bill Hand wrote to O'Brien asking to inspect the union's books. A clause in the rule book says that any member can do this on giving seven days notice. Hand's request sent the Natsopa officers into a panic as O'Brien was in the middle of his campaign to be re-elected as general secretary. Normally this is a formality – in his 24 years at the helm Briginshaw was never opposed – but O'Brien was facing a challenge from Barry Fitzpatrick – a senior FOC at the *Sunday Times*. Unsigned bills were appearing in Fleet Street attacking union officers' predilection for foreign trips. Four days before the *Observer* committee were due to arrive to inspect the books on 9 May, O'Brien sent a circular to all members: headed WRECKERS AT WORK: OBJECTIVE DESTROY NATSOPA, it said:

> the whole basis of this vicious and libellous campaign is the intent to wreck the union and to influence the present ballot which is taking place.

Lord Briginshaw and Owen O'Brien

UPP

In this atmosphere the five men from the *Observer* – total novices in accountancy – arrived at the union's HQ. They found the national assistant secretary, John Moakes, and the financial secretary, Alf Skinner, in uncooperative mood. They said the books were private, no notes could be taken and nothing was to be repeated verbally. The *Observer* men paid no attention, divided up the limited number of books they were given between themselves and started their random search. What they discovered was not conclusive proof of anything, but it was riveting reading. They found January 1978's expenses amounted to almost £3,000. This sum included a car allowance of £110 a quarter for each officer, the cost of a digital alarm clock, a £117 wine bill and bills for trips to Malta, including one by Mr and Mrs O'Brien. These trips were explained by saying that the union was thinking of buying four convalescent homes on the island.

The *Observer* chapel made another visit to the union on 22 May and there was another rich trawl. Mr Skinner – who had formally retired and was receiving a pension – seemed to continue to be employed as the union's financial secretary. Even though the general secretary's car was owned and completely paid for by the union, he still received the quarterly car allowance. His salary emerged as almost £12,000 a year and his October and November expenses claim amounted to £1,300. (He also has a £16,000 mortgage from the union's pension fund.) Elsewhere there was a bill for six bottles of Vieille Reserve La Nerolle at almost £12 a bottle, another wine bill for £540 and a series of restaurant bills from such modest establishments as De Quincey's, the Savoy, Simpsons in the Strand and the Strand Palace Hotel. Judging from some expenses claims, some officers never seemed to make any personal telephone calls from home.

There was no real method to the *Observer* men's search and there may be good explanations for these items but their appetites were thoroughly whetted and they made an appointment for another visit on 7 June. But that morning, O'Brien sent a letter around by hand saying there was to be no inspection: legal advice was being taken. Much later in the year, in December, the *Observer* chapel won a court case in which a judge advised that they *had* a right to bring in accountants. They immediately appointed accountants Peat Marwick and Mitchell to do the job for them.

PEAT'S REPORT was delivered last week, but the union has already had several weeks to study another accountants' report on its affairs. This report, which has a much more authoritative status than the preliminary investigations of the *Observer* chapel, has been produced by Baker Sutton, who were appointed in June following the Governing Council's rejection of last year's accounts.

O'Brien has done all he can to muzzle the *Observer* chapel. He has introduced a new rule making it illegal for a union member to talk to the media without the authority of the Natsopa executive. He has threatened the *Observer* members with disciplinary action if they persisted: they were called to a disciplinary meeting but the issue was shelved. He ruled discussion of the affair at a meeting of the London machine branch out of order and, when over-ruled by the meeting chairman, walked out. In short, O'Brien's behaviour hardly bears out his claim in the union journal that he had done everything to uncover the truth.

In this he had found a curious ally in the silence of much of the national press – whose owners and whose Newspaper Publishers Association find O'Brien the most accommodating Natsopa general secretary for some time. Bits of the Natsopa story have come out in the *Sunday Times*, *Observer* and *Guardian* in dribs and drabs. Last Sunday the *Observer* quoted parts of the Baker Sutton report but amazingly the mass circulation papers, who are normally so ruthless in the exposure of union malpractices, did not pick this up.

THE BAKER SUTTON report dealt at length with the so far most publicised transaction in Natsopa's affairs – the sale of its property in Blackfriars Road, London. Briefly, in 1972 and 1973, these properties were sold to a Ms Christine Dolores Dawes for £255,000 – yielding the union a profit of £196,000. Within months the properties had been resold to two companies who had previously been negotiating with the union to buy. The profit of £79,000 was shared between Lord Briginshaw, his secretary and common law wife Miss J. A. Wing, the union's assistant secretary Mr A. Davies and Mr Skinner. The explanation given to Baker Sutton for this extraordinary deal was the Industrial Relations Act. Like other TUC affiliates Natsopa was not registered under this act and so its assets were not protected against possible sequestration. The purpose of the Blackfriars

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Road sale was to 'siphon off' money to set up a 'shadow union' to carry on Natsopa's activities if the Act stopped it from doing its work. In 1972 the Natsopa executive had considered such a possibility and set up a Presidential Committee to do the job. However, the executive knew nothing of these arrangements and, as Baker Sutton point out, neither did the then president, who only heard about the second sale in 1978.

The accountants were told that Lord Briginshaw had sent a memorandum to Skinner following the repeal of the Act by the 1974 Labour government, saying the position would be regularised when certain tax problems had been sorted out.

But it was not until February 1977 that anything happened, when O'Brien – two years after his appointment – investigated the matter. He did so following Inland Revenue enquiries about capital gains tax on the deals and then, over a period of ten months, the money – less expenses and tax of £34,000 – was repaid to the union with an apparently small amount of interest of £5,000.

Baker Sutton's investigations turned up several other deals that were explained as part of the attempt to siphon off money for the shadow union. In one of these, Mr W. R. Rogers, the senior partner in the union's auditors, set up a company which in 1973 bought and sold some of the union's property at a profit of £9,000 to the company. The money was handed back to Natsopa, after deducting expenses, in 1974 and 1975, though, intriguingly, Baker Sutton recorded that a different explanation of these deals has been given to the Inland Revenue by Mr Rogers and this explanation has now been retracted.

The precise history of the £78,000 Blackfriars Road profit for the four or so years it was out of Natsopa's hands is somewhat murky. Some of the money languished in a safe deposit box in the Elephant and Castle branch of Lloyds bank. Some was invested in Krugerrands. Some went to Miss Wing, to help her buy a house – The Ongars, near Bishop's Stortford – to be used as the headquarters of the shadow union. The precise sum paid for this house is a mystery, but Miss Wing was helped with a £27,000 loan from the Natsopa pension fund and within eight months she had sold the house to the fund for £39,000. They sold it at an £8,000 loss two years later. The property was never occupied, despite having over £2,000 spent on redecoration and garden landscaping.

This is far from being the only curious transaction involving the pension fund – which provides the pension of the union's officers. The management of this fund seems to have broken the principle of pension fund management that the assets of the fund should be kept distinct from those of the employer and should be managed with particular care. The fund has assets of just under £850,000 but at times in the last few years as much as £460,000 has been tied up in properties which had something to do with Natsopa itself; even excluding one especially large property the peak year figure has been £227,000. Among the deals contributing to this are:

- A property in Clapham bought in 1972 for provincial members of the executive council to stay in. Rarely used and sold for a profit. Other deals were not so successful:
- In November 1973 the fund paid Lord Briginshaw £17,150 for his house in Upper Norwood, which he had bought for £8,145, helped with a loan from the fund in 1969. The property remained empty for two years before the fund sold it for a small loss. Lord Briginshaw, meanwhile,
- was paying £5 a week to live in 31 Streatham Court, bought by the fund in November 1973. But this was a long way from the House of Lords so,
- in April 1974 the fund spent £27,000 on a flat in Pimlico 'to provide a more convenient residence on Lord Briginshaw assuming duties as a member of the House of Lords.' However it remained unused and was sold for a loss of £3,000. A similar fate met another attempt by the fund to cater for others' convenience when
- in 1974 it paid £70,000 for the Court House in Rottingdean, to prevent a development which might damage the amenity of the unions' convalescent home. Unoccupied for three and a half years, it was sold for a loss of £20,000. Continuing its unusual investment policy of buying residential properties,
- in November 1973, the fund bought a flat, 55 Rutland Court, as part of the shadow union scheme. It was sold, at no profit, in 1974.
- In November 1974 the union sold its office in Chigwell Road for just over £29,000 to the auditor, Mr Rogers, who got most of the money as a mortgage from the fund. He now lets off part of the building to Natsopa for £2,400 a year. Commercial property appeared in the largest deal between the pension fund and the union when,
- as part of the shadow union scheme, Caxton House, the union's head office, was sold to the fund in December 1970 for £220,000, financed by a loan from the union. In 1973 the union bought the building back for £400,000 and immediately revalued it at £500,000. Either the pension fund sold too cheaply or this valuation was suspect: Lord Briginshaw told Baker Sutton that he had an independent valuation but they could find no evidence of this. The potential significance of this valuation is obvious when one examines Baker Sutton's analysis of the Natsopa accounts.

This shows that at the end of 1977 the net assets of the union were less than £250,000 – lower than previously thought.

THERE ARE TWO main reasons for this grim picture. First, the union had, at the end of 1976, an obligation to meet a £780,000 deficiency on its pension fund. This had arisen because of the poor investment performance of the fund coupled with its generous benefits. Officers contribute 5 per cent of their salary to the fund, and the union adds a further 19 per cent; in return the officers are promised inflation proofed pensions. Lord Briginshaw, for instance, receives a pension of £400 a month. Few, if any, pension funds can offer these benefits, especially if they are managed as ineptly as the above examples show Natsopa's to have been. Furthermore, it seems likely that the deficiency on the fund today is much greater than it was when accountants Bacon & Woodrow made their 1976 valuation.

The second reason for the union's parlous financial state is the result of a change in the terms and conditions of employment made in 1976. It seems to Baker Sutton that under this change the union is bound to pay a lump sum – a testimonial grant – to every employee who leaves; they have allowed £100,000 for this. On Tuesday, at the Governing Council meeting, it emerged that on his retirement Skinner was paid £22,000 – this is in addition to his inflation proofed pension.

Baker Sutton had further reservations about the Natsopa accounts being 'a true and fair view'. They point out that the union has what could be a significant liability to pay funeral benefits to members. Proper provision for this would clearly reduce assets further. For example, we have calculated that if only half the union's members had nine years of membership, their funeral benefits alone at today's prices would wipe out net assets. Clearly, any doubt over the property valuation on Caxton House or any increase in the liability to the pension fund would mean that Natsopa was technically bankrupt at the end of 1977.

Baker Sutton draw attention to certain other idiosyncrasies in the way in which the Natsopa accounts are presented. Until now it has been impossible to identify the amount lent to officers to buy cars or the amount of money made on property sales. A purchase of platinum ingots was recorded as 'repairs' and had not been authorised by the executive. Some other more significant activities had similarly not received proper authorisation, particularly the opening of Swiss bank accounts and the formation of an employment exchange.

Between 1968 and 1972 £15,000 was deposited in two Swiss bank accounts. Lord Briginshaw explained that the purpose was to open a convalescent home in Switzerland. This bizarre idea seems to have been abandoned in 1974, however, when two Natsopa officers went to Switzerland, packed the money in suitcases, brought it back to England and, over a three month period, changed it back into sterling. This was clearly illegal – breaking exchange control regulations – and Baker Sutton have only been able to trace £1,102 of the money finding its way back to Natsopa. Lord Briginshaw told them the rest would have been used for union purposes; he also claimed this happened with £1,130 raised from selling an employment agency.

In March 1971 Natsopa decided to invest in this agency – which, under an agreement with NPA, was given a complete monopoly of the placement of Natsopa members in Fleet Street. The Natsopa executive knew that Briginshaw would have 3 per cent of this company. In fact, through an intermediary company, he effectively held 46.7 per cent of the shares. Natsopa sold out to him completely in either 1971 or 1972 – the doubt is due to 'an unexplained discrepancy'. Briginshaw received the £1,130 when his front company was wound up in April 1975.

Baker Sutton confess that their investigations have been hampered by the lack of complete records but they do not hesitate to make some sharp remarks about the lack of proper financial control in the union and the need for a properly qualified accountant. In the circumstances this seems a remarkably restrained piece of understatement.

This Uganda

□ Brigadier Stella Bywaters, the last Salvation Army officer to leave the country after the organisation was banned, said Uganda was a fairly normal place.

'The people have quite a lot of freedom provided they obey the law and don't get involved in politics or any of those silly things,' she said. – *Melbourne Age* (Roger Page)

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Death by ceremonial

Saudi Arabia has become the darling of the West since the Shah failed as a client. It is a country which combines ultra-ostentatious capitalism with social relations that are pre-feudal in some respects. PENELOPE MORTIMER came upon an aspect of the latter.

> Riyadh. Sept 23 (SPA) – Six men were executed by beheading in Ta'if and Mecca Friday for crimes of violence during the month of Ramadan.
> According to a statement of the Governorate of Mecca, three men found guilty of adultery, fast breaking and murder were executed in Ta'if after the Friday prayer.
> On Ramadan 18 the three, Mansour Saleh ibn Ahmad Abu Hayya Al-Zahrani, Adbul Azis ibn Saleh ibn Ahmad Abu Hayya Al-Kahrani and Masoud ibn Ayad ibn Ghazi Al-Harithi pitched a tent on Ta'if's Khawiya Road where they committed adultery with two women and violated fasting rules.
> When security men attempted to arrest them, they shot dead Abdullah Waslullah Al-Thabiti and wounded a second soldier.
> The case was submitted to the King who ordered their execution . . .
>
> *Arab News* 24 September 1978.

TA'IF, THE SUMMER capital of Saudi Arabia, is a small town in the mountains, within commuting distance of both Jeddah and Mecca. One of Saudi's first highways, built at a cost of $455,000 a mile, links the three towns with the second Holy City, Medina. Crown Prince Fahd has built a luxury hotel there for special guests. King Abdul Aziz died there; King Khalid would probably like to. Muhammed himself once stayed there for ten days, looking for some more salubrious place to live than Mecca, but the rich Qurayshites teased him and threw stones. Later, after an unsuccessful attempt to besiege the place, he subdued it with guile and compromise. The House of Saud maintains the tradition.

I was in Jeddah with Antony Thomas, the documentary film maker, researching a television project. On Friday, September 22nd, we thought we'd take a day off and go to Ta'if, Friday being the Islamic equivalent of Sunday or the Sabbath. Since the beginning of the week we had been fighting through Jeddah's hot subway wind, listening to teachers, journalists, lawyers, boutique owners, white fish authorities, assistants of Ministers and assistants of assistants of Ministers, and there was at least another week to go. We were not on the Blandford circuit, and had nothing planned: a trip to the country, a meal, maybe a banana shake if we were lucky.

The Cadillac was air-conditioned, the back seat a luxurious crushed suede sofa. The young driver wore a particularly natty whiter-than-white thoab, matching khefa and new, polished leather clogs. He seemed lively, intelligent, reliable. We rode smoothly past the empty high-rises built for the bedous under Development Plan 1, past the Pepsi factory, the fleets of pilgrim buses grilling in their derelict terminal, the squashed bun of the palace of Prince Mohamed ben Abdulaziz, Khalid's elder brother, known (affectionately?) as the Father of Two Evils. Corrugated iron, flapping plastic, shacks and sheds and hutches; rusting, abandoned Chevys and Toyotas, driven to an early death; out into the stony desert, a landscape of monolithic factories, steel-rolling mills, oil refineries, lubricating plants, concrete works rising out of the fog of dust. Here the highway is flanked by huge hoardings advertising Sony, 7-Up, Omega watches, water beds. Mecca to our right – no entry for infidels. We turned left, towards the mountains.

Although Ta'if is said to have 100,000 inhabitants, very few of them were about. The heat was glaring, unrelieved by water or shade – not only have the Qurayshite vineyards perished under Wahhabist rule, but most legitimate vegetation as well. Thirsty, we hoped for a Fresca in a broken-down 'hotel'; the manager scuttled out of the dark, peaky with suspicion, anxious to swear he had never clapped eyes on us. The few potted plants must have been dead for years, the rexine armchairs were rotting, there was a smell of terminal decay. As we hurriedly left, he called a friend out of some cave in the back. They watched until we were in the car, then bolted inside and slammed the door.

The driver seemed nervous. He managed to make us understand that he wanted to visit his father. The visit lasted half an hour. Thomas climbed over the rubble, the litter of old tyres and 7-Up cans, to take pictures. I stayed in the car. During the whole of our trip I was only twice self-conscious about being a Western woman, and this was the first time. The second was the following week, in a Qadi courtroom. To anyone who is unused to being a second class citizen, a racial or sexual freak, it is a curious experience and should perhaps be obligatory for everyone at least once in their adult lives. As the car reached boiling point, the stares of the men outside a ramshackle cafe, of the teenage boys loafing in doorways, seemed to become more menacing, less natural. I began to hear a distant, subliminal throb of violence.

That may sound fanciful. I heard it. Perhaps it was the heat, or perhaps it was my own pulse. The driver came back with a great many brothers and cousins. They seemed excited, expostulating and gesticulating; but unsmiling. Thomas had mislaid a lens and was in no mood for my fancies. 'Palaces', he commanded pointing in some arbitrary direction. The driver glanced at his family and sat still. 'Khalid-Fahad-Abdullah-palaces!' The crowd of male relations didn't step back but were nosed out of the way, like sheep.

The driver was clearly reluctant, and drove his own course. We cruised along empty avenues flanked by minor palaces and villas, each behind its high, unscaleable wall, each guarded by private militia sprawling in plastic deck chairs on the pavement in front of double gates. No other cars, no bicycles, no cats, no people; glimpses of rioting bougainvillaea, closed shutters; intercom systems set into the concrete walls. What are the Saudi royals afraid of? There are few thugs, no revolutionaries; no one is going to break in and steal a billion rials worth of gold ashtrays. The women may be frantic to get out, but no man in his right mind is going to try to get in. Somewhere behind one of those walls, pickled in fantasy, H.R.H. Abdulla Al-Faisal, owner of the General Motors Agency and the Saudi Shipment Company, spends his summers writing poetry 'inspired by deprivation', while H.R.H. Mohamed Al Abdullah Al-Faisal, the thirty-six year old Minister of Education, dreams up lyrics which he publishes under the title 'Heart's Whispers'.

Thomas, a single-minded man, told the driver to stop, and set off with his camera. The guards watched him, at first, without moving; then, one by one, they got up from their deck chairs and began to wave him back. It was as though they couldn't believe their eyes. He paused, took half a dozen pictures, and returned leisurely to the car. In the distance, a lone muezzin opened the call to prayer. A couple of guards started to run towards us, but the driver put his foot down and we were away.

He drove recklessly to the main mosque, where we had no intention of going. I realise that his family must have told him the news, and he was anxious not to be late. The large open space in front of the mosque was crowded, a shoving mass of men, children, trucks, cars; boys darting in and out on bicycles decorated with flying pennants, plastic windmills, streamers, transistor radios strapped to the handlebars. A market, perhaps? A festival of sorts? Not on a Friday. The car park in the centre of the space was empty, fenced off by troops. There were soldiers on the roofs, soldiers in the minaret. The driver turned to us and, with a cheerful grin, chopped his neck with the flat of his hand. Out of the kindness of his heart he had brought us to an execution.

We told him we would stay. Now why? Certainly we discussed it, or our voices discussed it: after all, it was our duty, we were afraid we must. Neither of us admitted that it was an unexpected bonus. Half a mile away, the Princesses were still asleep, the Princes taking their morning swim, doing press-ups in their private gymnasiums, writing poetry. But this was real life: or, in these circumstances, death. If we were guilty of voyeurism, we justified it by the fact that this was our job. Would it have been less suspect, morally, to drive on?

It was an academic question, anyway, because the driver had no intention of going anywhere. He bull-dozed a parking space, and disappeared. Thomas, with the best possible motives, ordered me to stay in the car. He sauntered over to a group of British construction workers, red-faced, burly, sweaty, leaning against the side of a truck waiting for the action. He talked to them for a couple of minutes, then he too disappeared.

I have seldom been so angry. Through no fault of my own, I was apparently condemned to sit in the car with a headscarf on as though at a point-to-point. A man – we didn't yet know there were three men – was going to be killed in cold blood: was the sight of a woman's face likely to cause a riot? I rather hoped so; because of some chemical reaction, I was fighting mad. I rolled down my sleeves, as a gesture to decency, and went to look for Thomas. No one took the slightest notice of me as I pushed through the crowd.

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Camera Press

The Queen assumes the role of an honorary man in order to give British orders a boost.

Many people have asked what the crowd was like, as though watching death creates a particular kind of evil not present, say, in a football stadium. I had been conscious of this mounting sense of violence ever since we arrived in Ta'if, but that may have been something I was hearing in myself, and what I usually say is that it was much like any crowd, except that there were no women. Fathers held children on their shoulders; young men ate ice-cream out of tubs, telling each other (I assumed) jokes; kids burrowed through, playing catch: when the police pushed the ragged front row off the road, the specators waited a few minutes, then spilled over again, craning for a good view. Again and again they were herded back and surged forward, stubborn. Chanting droned from the open doors of the mosque. Three Red Crescent ambulances arrived, parking nearly side by side on the edge of the empty space. The drivers and the doctors (white-coated, stethoscopes dangling round their necks) got out, stood around the ambulances, lighting up cigarettes. One of the doctors was European, a balding blonde.

The chanting stopped. The congregation, including various officials, streamed out of the mosque. Suddenly there were a dozen officials within the ring of soldiers, shaking hands, embracing, chatting, much like churchwardens in a country churchyard after Matins. A dormobile nosed through the crowd: three veiled women, sitting bolt upright. It parked behind the ambulances. A convoy of police cars, sirens wailing and blue lights flashing, followed; then three closed army trucks, a couple more police cars. A drama was being set up. The prisoners in those trucks could have been led to the slaughter by one man.

By now every surrounding vehicle was clustered with spectators: I saw our driver perched like a small vulture on top of a Toyota, chewing gum. Men and boys had climbed on to the roofs and bonnets of cars, every window overlooking the square was filled. When the executioner arrived, there was a little sporadic clapping. He deserved more.

His name, I discovered, is Mr Said, and he has star quality: a huge Nubian, towering over the plump little Saudis, dressed to kill in a velvet jacket embroidered with gold, a flowing khafa – an enormous, expansive presence. More magnificant than a toreador, he swept round the barrier of troops, kissing, clasping hands, embracing old friends. Then he turned towards Mecca, sank into a graceful, glittering heap, and prayed. Like clockwork, two ranks of the National Guard also prostrated themselves. Allah, presumably, had arrived.

Three women – impossible to tell whether they were the ones who had arrived in the van – walked very fast, almost marched, in single file down the cleared roadway. They were extraordinary: dressed in ceremonial clothes, party dresses, diaphanous magenta veils, skirts, bodices, jackets glistening with gold thread. The older, fat one was in the lead; the two younger women followed, their heads rigid, stiff arms held out from the elbows, like marching dolls. There was a haughtiness, a contempt about them that was like an electric current, blazing a trail of white-hot grief, untouchable. Mothers, wives, a grandmother? I don't know. They disappeared and the crowd, fallen back while they passed, streamed over the road again. We were pushed with them. A beautiful boy, still and widthdrawn, sat limply on the bonnet of a car; he wore a gold skull cap and was staring at his bony hands. Hot, sweating men began to use me as a prop or lever. I swore at them, shouted, (ludicrously, 'For Christ's sake! For God's sake!') but their whole attention was riveted on the square. Thomas barricaded me with his arm, but I was no longer interested in watching, I wanted to get away.

That, of course, was impossible. I stood sullen, refusing to look, trying to disassociate myself from the whole experience. A long indictment was read over the loudspeakers. A few men round us clicked their tongues, conventional sounds of shocked disapproval, but most of them didn't seem to be listening. Then the crowd moved again. Without wanting to, I saw a boy stepping out of one of the army trucks in the centre of the square. He wasn't dragged, he wasn't pushed. He stepped, and stood for a moment grinning at the crowd, waving. He looked about nineteen, bareheaded, wearing a white thoab. In that moment I must have travelled back at least six hundred years, because one extraordinary thought flashed on my mind like a headline. I thought: may God have mercy on his soul. Clear as a bell. And as though some tap, quite out of my control, had been turned on, my eyes filled with tears, I was convulsed with pity and anger and a sense of mourning.

I pushed my way back to the car, releasing Thomas to climb on to a truck and see the rest. He came down with some ghoulish stories: Mr Said's sword raised, Mr Said running a few yards, raising his sword again, running a few yards – had they let the boy loose, was it some hideous, traditional sport? I could believe anything. The head, Thomas said, had been wrapped in a winding sheet and thrown into an ambulance; the body, the bare soles of its feet turned inwards, was left on the ground, there was no blood on the thoab. Oh, I said, or Indeed, or something of the sort. The crowd, having clapped and cheered a little, was dispersing very quickly. The police cars flashed by. The soldiers, slinging their rifles over their shoulders, were climbing down from their lookout points. The windows were already empty, except for a few children hanging over the sills, as though anxious to see the credits. The driver, thoroughly delighted, came back. Again he mimed chopping his neck, and held up three fingers. Then he noticed me and, full of manly sympathy, rubbed his eyes and traced tears down his cheeks: how right, how proper, that even an Englishwoman should show such a soft heart. I hated him, passionately. At that point, reason had deserted me.

We returned immediately to Jeddah, and didn't speak for at least thirty miles. Somehow we were embarrassed, shifty. It wasn't until next day, when we read the paper, that we realised there had been three executions, and that Mr Said's curious dance had been the swift, expert dispatching of three separate victims. It made very little difference.

After a while, of course, I regained what may mistakenly be called a sense of proportion. It is quite useless – as Jim Landers, the American editor of 'Arab News', told me – to put 'a romantic Western interpretation' on the mores of the Muslin world. The only thing we have in common is a monotheistic society, and to an agnostic that isn't much help. 'Those . . . that spread disorders in the land shall be put to death or crucified or have their hands and feet cut off on alternate sides or be banished from the country,' (Koran. Chapter 5). That is the word of God, and Saudi Arabia is a theocratic state administered by the House of Saud, God's deputies. In spite of the infinite complexities of the Shari'a, there is no such thing as criminal law as we understand it – a man-made device tethered to a Christian principle that we are all innocent until proved (by other men) guilty. A British lawyer may protest, as Richard Du Cann QC did on television the other night, 'No barrister has God to help him!', but to a Muslim this would not only be blasphemy, but an outright lie. God (ostensibly in the voice of King Khalid, but the King was very sick at the time, and preparing to set off for Cleveland, Ohio) commanded the execution of those insignificant young men. No trial is mentioned, and no trial would be necessary. In theory, since one of the charges was adultery, four responsible, adult males should have testified that they witnessed actual penetration, not just fooling about in a tent. But the security men presumably saw signs of food, and Abdullah Waslullah Al-Thabiti was undeniably dead. As Job, one of Mohammed's favourite prophets, discovered, it's a waste of time and energy to put up any defence when God himself is prosecuting.

As for the barbarism of public executions, the rational mind hints uneasily that it's just as barbaric when a boy rapes a 92-year-old

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woman – as happened in this green and pleasant land very recently – and is admonished by four years in a relatively cosy jail. A British joiner we talked to pointed out (an indisputable fact) that Islamic punishments are a great deterrent; he believed that if we had the same system here, it would save a lot of crime and money. He himself had seen a particularly nasty execution, done by amatuers, and although he admitted he was 'turned up', the principle of the thing seemed to him sensible.

Reason often plays devil's advocate. One's emotions and moral sense, however confused, come willy-nilly from a hybrid Christian/humanist ethic, and in order to begin to understand Islam these principles have to be abandoned, which I don't believe is possible. Saudi Arabia in 1979 still adheres strictly to the 18th century Salfi doctrine propounded by Ibn-Abdul-Wahhab. Interpreted by King Faisal, who was assassinated for his progressive views, this was re-phrased as 'an epoch-making call for Islamic solidarity . . . (to combat) the dangers of secularism, atheism, intellectual evasion, and the various other forces that threaten to divert men from Islam.' 'It is a policy,' states the Foreign Minister, H.R.H. Prince Saud Al Faisal, 'based on belief in Allah and the idealistic values of man'.

Standing in the hot square in Ta'if watching Mr Said at work, these idealistic values seemed remote as the royal housing estate up the road. A few days later, we talked to a very likeable Saudi attorney. When we told him we had seen an execution he smiled, patiently waiting for us to get to the point. Amputation seemed to him not only perfectly just, but hilariously funny. A devout Muslim and a gentle fellow, he was completely devoid of any sense of the dignity of man or the value of human life. As for death, the Prophet said, 'No one dies unless Allah permits. The term of every life is fixed.' *Inshallah* . . .

In hindsight, I am more appalled by the crowd than by the execution itself. I knew that not one man, probably not even one child, felt a twinge of pity or awe; I was quite certain that there was not even a whisper of doubt. The three-year-olds will remember a commonplace mixture of iced lollies and blood; the ten-year-old probably want to be Mr Said when they grow up. It seems extremely probably that in the second millenium (A.D. Islam is still in its 14th century) they too will be taking their children and grandchildren to that square after Friday prayer-time. When Jan Morris wrote in 1954 'the idea of pan-Islam is all but dead', Allah must have chuckled, knowing that so long as he had oil up his sleeve, and the rapidly failing West as his only competitor, Islam would not only live, but rapidly become more powerful than ever.

The Queen and Zbignew Brzezinski, the West's most recent commercial travellers in Saudi Arabia, are not of course shown how Islamic justice can be seen to be done. David Owen may bleat faintly about human rights, but one rap over the knuckles from the Saudis and he backs down in grovelling apology. Saudi customs are none of our business, unless they turn off the oil supply. Nazi customs were none of our business, until the Germans threatened our security. The only encouraging thought is that, come what may, a few boys will go pitching their tents on the Khawiya Road, breaking the fast, having it off with their girl friends; and because they are so profoundly ignorant, some of them will face Mr Said with that gallant, idiotic wave, finding a moment of glory at the end of their short and brutish lives.

ECONOMICS Cambridge and Prediction

Bruce Page writes: The annual review produced by the Cambridge Economic Policy Group is generally controversial, and this year's version, published yesterday, looks like being exceptionally so. Of course, it's not surprising to find the CEPG recommending import controls and predicting dire consequences for the economy if they are not adopted.

What is new is that this time they argue in much more detail their proposition that import controls would benefit world trade generally, rather than harm it – and claim to back this up with projections from a highly-original econometric model of the British economy and the international trading system. This, they say, 'breaks new ground' in being based on trade data going back to 1960, in treating different kinds of trade (food and raw materials; oil and fuel; manufactured goods) separately, and in containing 'a well-defined representation of the determination of national government policies'. In short, they are saying that their policy recommendations now have something like scientific proof behind them.

The political impact is apt to be large – especially in the context of continued Labour debate over membership of the EEC, for the Cambridge group say bluntly that international trading agreements should be broken 'unilaterally' if there is no other way to organise effective import controls. But the academic impact, although more muted, will also be considerable, because very few professional econometrists are likely to accept that the Cambridge group's latest methods of argument are legitimate.

This is not the same thing as saying that their general conclusions are mischievous, or necessarily wrong. Plenty of economists are ready to accept – rather in the manner of NEW STATESMAN leading articles – that import controls, or other drastic measures, may be required to deal with the structural problems of the British economy. Plenty of others are willing to say that the CEPG, led by Wynne Godley and Francis Cripps, has generally been right in forecasting the consequences of Treasury orthodoxy, in terms of unemployment and industrial decay. But it is something else again to claim to have produced an econometric model – a mathematical simulacrum – of the world trade system, capable of prediction up to 1985 of world trade movements, and the effect upon them of import retrictions by various countries.

Some of the prospects which the Cambridge group hold out for the British economy are indeed attractive. They say that, given a policy of import controls combined with vigorous stimulation of the domestic economy, it would be possible to increase our gross domestic product by as much as 22 per cent by 1985 – meanwhile abolishing unemployment and obtaining, through increased output, a counter-inflationary effect of nearly nine per cent. But in other circumstances, the outlook will be grim. In the words of the *Review*:

> If deepening recession in the 1980s is to be avoided in the UK, the UK must pursue expansionary policies of its own, and such action must of necessity be combined with measures to alleviate the balance of payments constraint upon growth.

Having produced striking predictions of this kind for the British economy, the model is then used to demonstrate that none of the measures rendered necessary will produce counter-productive effects on world trade (ones to which a trade-dependent economy such as ours would be especially vulnerable). The question is whether it is sophisticated enough to achieve so large a task, and on the description given in the *Review* (Appendix A) it is hard to see that it can be. What the CEPG have done is examine patterns of world trade between 1960 and 1978, derive trend lines from them, and extend them up to 1985. By examining manufactures separately from other trade-sectors, they are able to calculate what effect *might* be produced on the British balance of payments by a restriction of manufactured imports, and to show what effects *might* be produced in the Third World by expansion in the developed countries.

There are parts of the analysis which are convincing enough in general terms. For instance, the Cambridge group argues that world recession is unlikely to be ameliorated by a 'locomotive' effect produced through expansion in the strong economies of Japan and Germany. Other things remaining unchanged, Japan's share of manufacturing trade would simply expand so fast as to unbalance most other economies, rather than stimulate them.

But if it is to be regarded as an exact predictive mechanism, there are large and necessary pieces of apparatus which are simply missing – most noticeably, there is no consideration of price effects, which would be bound to have some influence on world trade outcomes over the period which the model sets out to cover. Nor is it possible to find in Appendix A any justification for the remarkable claim made in the *Review*'s introduction, to have incorporated a 'representation of the determination of national government policies' indeed, it is not explained anywhere just what this might mean. (Of course, the Appendix does not set out to be a total description of the model, and some of these gaps may be filled when the complete manual is published next month.)

What the CEPG have produced seems to be an illustrative model, through which it is possible to show the effects that import controls – or other economic policies – are *capable* of having. But this is a long way from a model which replicates the actual behaviour of the world trade system, making it possible to predict the way that import controls would work in practice. (In designing a chair, a cardboard model could be useful for making sure that the geometry has been correctly imagined. But something much more would be needed to predict how the parts of the chair would stand up to actual use.) There is some danger that the value of the Cambridge exercise could be reduced if it is oversold.

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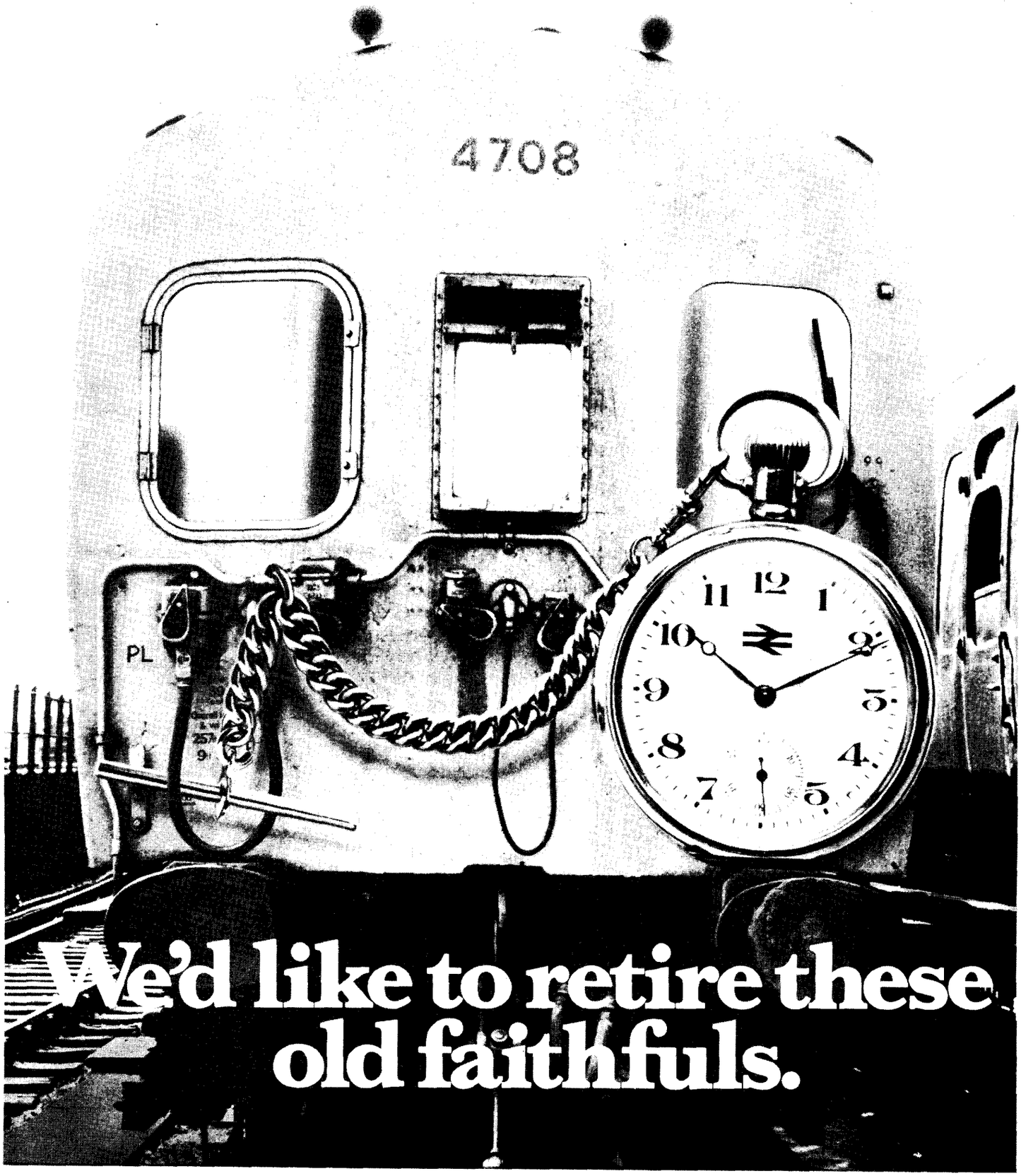

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POLITICS
Christopher Price

The Government's last act has been to try and stop open government

Merlyn's final Act

IF THE GOVERNMENT fails to survive this week, one of the casualties will be Clement Freud's Official Information Bill; if it manages to stagger on a little longer, the Bill will come up for its Report stage in the House on Friday 6 April. Though it implements a Labour manifesto pledge – to reform the Official Secrets Act and provide a public right of access to official information – it is a pledge which is instinctively unwelcome not only to the Prime Minister and Home Secretary but also to the majority of the cabinet. On top of this, the mandarins, in their trade union disguise as the Association of First Division Civil Servants, though they implausibly insist that they are not against the *principle* of the Bill, have nevertheless put forward reservations which are calculated to cripple it. Only a minority party, trading votes for further support, could twist the Government's arm hard enough to give the Bill any real chance of becoming law. So far the Liberals have shown no disposition whatsoever to use their position to compel open government and pass into legislation this Bill which they adopted with the express intention of embarrassing a Labour cabinet with its own manifesto commitment.

But whatever the fate of the Bill henceforth, it has already achieved two political objectives. First, it has set up a deal over the reform of the Official Secrets Act. The Bill is in two parts: the first provides a right of access to official information – much on the lines of the Freedom of Information Act in the US; this is unacceptable to both front benches. The second part reforms section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 on the lines suggested by the Franks Report of 1972: this, both cabinet and shadow cabinet rather like: it gives government a greater chance of convicting public servants who whistleblow and ordinary citizens who pass on unauthorised leaks. Now, whatever party takes over, greater government power over whistleblowers will only be granted at the price of greater community power over information. If any government wants reform of the Official Secrets Act, they will now have to concede a statutory right of access to official information.

The second achievement is an emerging backbench coalition of libertarian, anti-bureaucratic interests in each of the major parties. True, Tory libertarians and believers in open government are still rather few and far between: but the Bill has revealed a solid group of Tories who have stood up to quite intense pressure from their own front bench – 'rocking the boat', 'jeopardising security', 'mixing with reds – and worse still, Clement Freud'. Though it will still take some time for the Freedom Association (son of NAFF) and the NCCL to get used to their new relationship in bed with one another, the makings now exist of a more or less permanent backbench majority over the secretive, establishment assumptions of the two front benches. Hitherto MPs have too often equated 'freedom of information' with monotonously regular mailings from scientologists and anti-fluoridisers. Now a respectable lobby has emerged.

Left to right: Merlyn Rees, Lord Croham (formerly Sir Douglas Allen) and Clement Freud

Universal Pictorial

THE ESTABLISHMENT has been worried for some time about these developments. The first sign of panic was the Croham Directive, a letter from (the then) Sir Douglas Allen, head of the Home Civil Service, to all permanent secretaries on 6 July 1977, urging, at Callaghan's insistence, the release of more background documents. As his final act before retirement and translation to the Barony of Croham, Sir Douglas's plea came with the express motive of heading off demands for a public *right* of access to information.

> There are many who would have wanted the Government to go much further (on the lines of the formidably burdensome Freedom of Information Act in the USA). Our prospects of being able to avoid such an expensive development could well depend on whether we can show that the Prime Minister's statement had reality and results. So I ask all of you to keep this question of publicising material well on your check-list of action in any significant areas of policy formulation, even at Divisional level: and to encourage your Ministers to take an interest in the question.

No doubt because of this rather despairing note, the document itself was kept firmly secret, until the inevitable leak occurred and the Prime Minister was forced by a parliamentary question from Jeff Rooker MP to publish it in January 1978. It was followed by an anodyne White Paper in July on Official Secrets, which declared the govermment's 'open mind' on its own manifesto commitment of open government and promised 'a more detailed study'.

The 'more detailed study' turned out to be two civil servants, a Mr M. G. Power and a Miss Caroline Morrison, perambulating around Europe and America, and reporting back. These jaunts are becoming repetitive. The Franks Committee sent its members on similar journeys in 1971. Mr Roy Jenkins and his aide, Mr Anthony Lester, followed three years later. In an effort to head off the debate on right of access on 6 April, the government this week published a Green Paper, accepting the Franks reforms to Section 2 but suggesting only discretionary disclosure of information, and a White Paper based on Mr Power's and Miss Morrison's US experiences. They seem to have come back with little enthusiasm for the idea and many objections to it – which is odd, as following their footsteps round Washington a month or two later, I received rather more positive reports.

So the objective of the Civil Service (and in particular the Cabinet Office) following the Power/Morrison visit is now one of somehow stopping the bandwagon short of a public *right* of access. In Cabinet documents they have christened the operation with a typically hideous bureauspeak word – 'Openness' – i.e. the fight to preserve secrecy. Their objections go something like this: in the US the Act is very expensive in money and manpower: it also endangers security and law enforcement: it is unnecessary in Britain where we have a vigilant parliament and ferret-like MPs who uncover facts and control ministers; moreover it is all two much to swallow in one gulp. Why not start more modestly? Just reform section 2; or start on privacy and give the *individual* a right to his files; why not put off a *right* of access till we have more time, more trips to America, more excuses thought up? Let's start with something *discretionary* on ministers; or give select committees more power; they could get the information for the public. After all Britain is not like America. Watergate could never happen here.

True, cost is a problem in the US, and public right of access would cost several million pounds. Twenty-four million dollars is an oft-quoted figure for the US. But there are also massive benefits, as well as costs, and in the US it is increasingly seen as a necessary antidote to government power in a modern democracy. Most bureaucrats I met in Washington seemed to have come to look on their new duty to provide information in a rather proud positive light. The doctrine of public accountability of public servants not only for the money they spend but also for facts they present and the *opinions* they express, is rapidly becoming entrenched. Nor is there any truth in the allegation that the US Act has led to security leaks. Certainly there are leaks in the US, probably more than in the UK. But as one of the counsel to the Pentagon put it: 'It's all the fault of those cottonpicking journalists on *Aviation Week* and competitive manufacturers leaking them information to pick up defence contracts'. The FBI felt they might have experienced one instance of organised criminals using the Act to pick up law and order information, but failed to give details. There are some complaints about staff time spent on 'segregability' – the need to cross out names to preserve individual privacy – but

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they are minor irritants; and everyone else I met, in the press, Congress and the general public, were agreed that 1974 amendments which strengthened the Freedom of Information Act (passed after patient lobbying by Nader and timely horror at Watergate) has done nothing but good.

The *Washington Post* was particularly interesting. I had heard from my Civil Service sources that the paper was indifferent towards the new Act and only used it about six times a year. This is true in terms of going to court to obtain documents; but only so because the documents they want now flow free; the bureaucrats no longer fight to keep them secret. Sometimes, if there are thought to be problems about defamation, the document is officially refused under the Act, but left lying around for the reporter to pick up and use at his own discretion. It has begun to raise the whole ethic of both bureaucrat and journalist. The bureaucrats are more careful, eschew speculation, and probably write more accurately and fairly. The journalists now get more material, but also more painstaking work to find the story.

So to the Americans, Government opposition to the Freud Bill is a bit of a puzzle. The protection proposed for British security information in the revamped Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act is immensely tighter than that in the US in its power to prevent whistleblowing; and the Freud Bill, with the oversight by the Ombudsman, has avoided the American problem of perpetual judicial reviews. The sort of safeguards the Government want are already entrenched: yet they are reportedly ready to block the Bill, as the Conservatives undoubtedly would.

So if Parliament survives until 6 April, the backbench task will be considerable, and if it doesn't, the demand will persist for a public right of access to what should be public information. The contribution of obsessive government secrecy to our social *and economic* problems is only slowly dawning on MPs. Many, particularly those who served their apprenticeship in local government, still keep faith in secrecy and bureaucracy as instruments of socialist change. Translated to Whitehall, this belief merges easily with the nineteenth century ruling class ethic which kept its secrets safe within the Athenaeum and the Reform – a comfortable and understandable attitude in the new National Party of Government. They can only be jerked out of it, by a new and quite specific commitment in Labour's imminent manifesto, and by an impressive show of support at the report stage on 6 April.

ENERGY
Gabriel Ronay

Comecon finds a new source of power — but risks trouble

East Europe's nuclear gamble

WHATEVER THEIR OFFICIAL line, the communist governments of Eastern Europe are facing the same problems as the West. As a result of their rapid industrialisation programme, as well as world market shortages and rising prices, they are being forced to look for alternative energy sources. Down-to-earth officials in charge of energy policy in most Western countries have, in recent years, pinned their hopes, and based their plans, on a rapid expansion of nuclear energy – and have been met with a barrage of organised protest. In Sweden, for example, Olof Palme's ambitious nuclear programme led to the fall of the social democratic government after over three decades of Labour rule. In the Eastern bloc, however, there have been no attempts at public discussion or consultation.

Moscow has committed Comecon (the Soviet bloc's supranational economic organisation) to a long-term co-ordinated nuclear energy development programme. The nuclear option has several advantages from the Russian point of view: it further integrates the countries of Eastern Europe, and weans them off Russia's fossil-based energy resources – which now hardly cover Moscow's own energy needs. Moreover, there is lucrative business to be had in supplying all the Comecon countries with Soviet-designed Voronezh-type nuclear reactors.

The Eastern European mass media have ignored the ecological dangers of a large-scale nuclear programme, while at the same time giving prominent coverage to the mass protests in West Germany against nuclear expansion. It has been emphasised, however, that the German protest was directed against nuclear energy 'in conditions of growing contradictions between the possibilities which scientific progress could secure to working people and its use under monopoly-capitalist rule and property relations directed against the interests of working people'.

This kind of sophistry has been reinforced with assurances about the 'absolute safety' of Soviet reactors. Officials are forever stressing that nearly half the cost of nuclear power stations built with Soviet assistance is spent on safety devices, 'making them the safest in the world'. The ascertainable record of Soviet reactors does not, however, support this claim; and, because of the grand scale of the Soviet bloc's nuclear energy programme and the ecological dangers it may pose for everyone in Europe, it is worth looking at the facts in some detail.

The speed of the programme can be gauged from the fact that, between 1971 and 1977, the Soviet bloc had increased its nuclear power generating capacity *seven fold*. Comecon's energy plan foresees a further increase by 1980 to reach 30,000 MW, although because of the relatively low starting base this will make up only about 10 per cent of the bloc's total energy capacity. Although all matters nuclear are shrouded in secrecy, it has been reliably reported that the Soviet Union has 18 fully-operational nuclear power stations, with another 20 or so under construction – of which seven are expected to come into service next year.

It seems that Russia's nuclear building programme was temporarily delayed by an appalling nuclear catastrophe. According to informed Western scientists, large-scale nuclear contamination occurred in the Soviet Union in 1958 as a result of a major explosion in a nuclear reactor. But Dr Zhores Medvedev, the exiled Russian biochemist now working at the National Institute for Medical Research in London, claims that the disaster was caused by nuclear reactor wastes which had been buried at a shallow depth near the town of Blagoveshchensk in the Urals. He says the explosion caused hundreds of deaths and tens of thousands of cases of radiation sickness, and left vast areas between Sverdlovsk and Chelyabinsk polluted by strontium 90 and caesium 137. Migratory birds which he examined carried in their bones and muscles evidence of that nuclear disaster.

In Czechoslovakia, the country's first nuclear power plant – at Javslovske Bohunice, Slovakia, and equipped with a Voronezh-type reactor – began trial operations in one of its two energy units last December. It was built, according to the party paper *Rude Pravo*, 'thanks to the fraternal assistance of the Soviet Union and the close co-operation between the two countries'. It is located near an 'experimental and research' nuclear plant using a heavy water gas-cooled Soviet reactor. Another Czech nuclear power station is now under construction – with Soviet assistance, of course – at Dukovany, while another nuclear power station will soon come into operation at Mochovice. The ground work has been laid for two further plants.

Charter 77, the human rights group, has reported two serious accidents during the past two years at the experimental plant at Javslovske Bohunice. On 5 January 1976 two technicians choked to death after carbon dioxide had escaped from the reactor: they were unable to escape because the emergency exit was locked to prevent thefts. During the accident some radioactive gases were released into the atmosphere, as they were again on 24 February 1977 when, because of a 'negligent' installation of a fuel rod, radioactive fluid was flushed through the plant's drainage system, contaminating a stream. As a result of the two accidents, the plant had to be closed down.

Bulgaria and Hungary also have one Voronezh-type nuclear power plant each, with more being built, while Poland is scheduled to commission its first by 1984. Romania, however, in a characteristically Gaullist decision, has purchased a Canadian-designed Candu reactor, with an option on a second one. The move reflects Bucharest's fear of dependence on Soviet nuclear hardware and fuel. A 440 MW plant, to have been built with Soviet assistance under a 1970 agreement, has been greatly delayed, and the country's first nuclear power plant will now come into operation in 1981, according to Bucharest radio. It is expected to supply up to 27 per cent of the country's energy needs.

The next decade will show whether the Soviet bloc states have taken the right decision on nuclear power. Whereas the Soviet Union has vast uninhabited regions in which to house its nuclear reactors, the densely populated Eastern European countries are exposing themselves to grave ecological and political dangers. Because of its apolitical nature, ecology is rapidly becoming a focal point of interest in Eastern Europe, and accidents like those in Czechoslovakia could result in mass protests, with unpredictable consequences. What Comecon energy chiefs have gained on the swings of a controlled press may yet be lost on the roundabouts of a political backlash.

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The Midland lends a hand to small businesses.

In his Annual Review Lord Armstrong, Chairman of the Midland Bank Group, lays particular emphasis on the importance to the mixed economy of the small independent family business and the need for such businesses to thrive. Given that the Government provide the right fiscal and monetary climate, the providers of finance should, he said, make a special effort to tailor their services to the particular requirements of these businesses.

An array of specialist financing facilities

'We have developed a number of companies able and ready to provide equity capital in amounts of up to £500,000, namely Moracrest Investments Limited (in which we are in partnership with the Prudential Assurance Company Limited and the British Gas Corporation Central Pension Funds), Midland Montagu Industrial Finance

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"The Midland Bank Group has developed an array of specialist enterprises and arrangements which cater fully for the financing needs of small businesses. As providers of finance we are determined that no viable enterprise is turned away by lack of imagination on our part."

The Rt. Hon. Lord Armstrong of Sanderstead, Chairman, Midland Bank Limited.

Limited and Midland Industrial Investments Limited.'

'Alongside an equity investment these companies are prepared to provide medium or long term lending and indeed the Bank undertakes such lending without equity participation. In appropriate circumstances we are prepared to lend for up to 20 years.'

Access through local branches

'To be sure that our facilities are continuously adapted to the changing needs of our customers, we have set up at Headquarters a special unit, the Independent Business Banking Unit, which will be a focal point for internal and external inquiry and a source of knowledge and authority for all concerned. As a result, we offer to our smaller corporate customers, through any local branch, access to the fullest possible range of services.'

New help for smaller exporters

'We believe that we have also found a practical way to help those smaller businesses which engage in exporting. A new scheme has been devised by the Bank, in conjunction with the Export Credits Guarantee Department and one of our Group companies, London American International Corporation Limited. Any finance provided under this scheme will usually be over and above any facilities which may have been arranged for the provision of working capital or fixed investment.'

1978 results – and the outlook

'In the year just ended there have been encouraging developments in virtually every sector of the Group's business and these reflect very great credit on the skill, energy and devotion of all concerned.'

'Although the outlook appears less promising than it did a year ago, we are confident that we have the resources and the capacity to steer our way through on an even keel.'

Summary of Group Results	£000's
Profit before taxation	231,408
Taxation	88,017
Attributable profit (after extraordinary items and minority interests)	118,802
Shareholders' dividends	26,714
Retained profit	92,088
Total assets	15,550,275

For a copy of Lord Armstrong's full Statement and Report for 1978 please write to: The Secretary, Midland Bank Limited, Head Office, 27 Poultry, London EC2P 2BX.

Midland Bank Group

If you would like further details of Midland Bank Group financing facilities for small businesses enquire at any Midland Branch.

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London Diary

☐ Brought up in the Yorkshire Penny Savings Bank, I thought all banks were more or less equal (though the National Westminster sounded terribly provincial). It was a shock to discover that some are more equal than others. Take Coutts. A friend, aged 36 and earning about £8,500 a year, tried to open an account recently at the Cavendish Square branch of Coutts, bankers to the Queen. ('Yes, that *is* our honour, Madam', they said in hushed tones.) He was turned down by one of the managers, Mr Jim Tough – I swear it's true – on the grounds that he didn't earn enough to hold an account at a branch to which even his employers had recommended him.

'We are a friendly, personal bank', Mr Tough told me when questioned about this apparent discrimination. 'I wouldn't say we were snobbish, though we do have a charisma, if you like. We offer a personal service to people, the odd cup of coffee, a shoulder to cry on if necessary.' What, then, was wrong with £8,500 a year? 'It's a matter of age, really. If your friend had been 21 and earning, say, £5,000 a year, there would have been no problem. It would mean that Clive had drive, determination and ambition. But at 36, let's face it, £8,500 is not the right sort of income – perhaps your friend would be better off with one of the other banks.' Of course, he added, there were no hard and fast rules, and no-one at Coutts would ever dream of discriminating against anyone. It was just a matter, the cost of coffee and personal service being what it is, of some people being more suitable than others.

Why, I asked Clive, was he so keen to join the Coutts banking club? It seems that he had read a biography of Lady Hester Stanhope, intrepid explorer, niece of William Pitt, and a recipient of massive overdrafts from Thomas Coutts. 'I pass over unmentioned', Coutts wrote to her in 1813 about the cost of her latest escapade in Syria, 'the £3,200 so long overdue to me.' Such a bank, my friend thought, cannot be bad. Alas: *autres temps, autres moeurs.*

☐ Surprising how unprofessional professionals can sometimes be. The latest issue of the house magazine of the advertising firm, Ogilvy, Benson & Mather, has an advertisement for their booklet *How to Write Better.* Next to the order form is a display ad of the book's cover, complete with advice from David Ogilvy, the man responsible for the famous Rolls-Royce ad, 'At 60 miles an hour, the loudest sound you can hear is the ticking of the clock.' Indeed, Ogilvy is so well-respected, in a profession noted for the butterfly-short careers of its practitioners, that even advertising men have heard of him. His tip to aspirant writers goes (sic): 'Good writing is a prequisite to success at Ogilvy & Mather. All the members of our top management are good writers. Coincedence?'

☐ With an election coming up, the pro-abortion lobby is understandably angered by this week's fuss over the 20-week-old aborted foetus which cried out, before dying, in a public ward at Wanstead Hospital in East London. The incident happened over six months ago, and was reported at the time. No-one bothered about it until, with an imminent election, anti-abortion groups inundated Fleet Street with versions of a story they had previously chosen to ignore.

There are precedents for such politically-timed 'shock, horror' stories. It was not until the *Sunday Times* so thoroughly discredited the book *Babies for Burning*, that the 'Barking baby case' came out. The story had been released three weeks earlier. In fact, it was not an abortion, but a Caesarean section undertaken to save the life of the mother who had carried the child for 29 weeks. The foetus, thought to be dead, was heard to cry, was resuscitated and survived. It was only when the authors were impugned for journalistic malpractice that the anti-abortion lot tried to fight back by a cheap and nugatory attack on the doctors involved.

The distressing aspect of all this is that the need for abortion, despite the ready availability of contraception, will not diminish. At the conference last week organised by Doctors for a Woman's Choice on Abortion, Dr Elphis Christopher, senior community physician for Haringey, made some telling arguments against the movement to amend the 1967 Act. For a start, contraception is not 100 per cent safe, and quite often people just can't be bothered to use it. Then, women decide to get pregnant but find – lovers having left them, perhaps – that they do not wish to continue with the pregnancy. Advances in medical techniques also increase the need for abortion. It is now much easier to detect congenital abnormalities at an early stage (*spina bifida,* for example) and offer the pregnant woman the choice of abortion. The most sinister aspect of the whole scare story is that the notes on the Wanstead case have disappeared from the office of the department involved.

☐ It is always gratifying when people practise what they preach. Not long ago, I heard from a psychiatrist friend, Dr Michael Simpson, about a magazine called *Maledicta*, published in America by one Dr Reinhold Aman, president of the International Research Centre for Verbal Aggression, Inc. A scholarly publication, it includes articles on 'Malediction and Psycho-Semantic Theory: The Case for Yiddish'; 'He shot Her with Great Stones – Prominent Sexual Metaphors in the Non-Shakespearean Drama of Renaissance England'; and 'Latent Accusative Tendencies in the Skopje Dialect, or Where to go and What to do with it in Central Macedonia'.

Intrigued, not to say incredulous, I wrote to Dr Aman asking for a back copy, with a view to taking out a subscription. His reply was a masterpiece of delicate verbal aggression:

> 'Dear Ms/Mrs/Miss Hall, what am I going to do with you? I do appreciate your interest in *Mal* but I simply can't mail sample copies of *Maledicta* to every journalist who wants a copy. I've had to cut the list of freebie copies from 300 to 75 or so, as most journalists haven't done a bleeding thing for me. They claim they'll write glowing stories for zillions of their readers, but I have yet to see one line. If you can work a note or something into the NEW STATESMAN, *preferably with address,* I would airmail you a copy, gratis . . . What I would suggest is that you look at the copies Dr Michael Simpson has. Tell Michael not to be possessive but to let you look at *his* (*Maledicta*, that is) or I'll lay an ancient curse on him, causing him to grow zits on his left orchid. I don't mean to be whiney but everyone from gay rags to Turkish Studies wants a free *Mal.* Hoping to hear from you . . .'

I shall, of course, reply in a suitable manner. Meanwhile, I withhold the address until a back copy arrives. Hoping to hear from you, Dr Aman.

☐ The problem of who to put on the new £50 banknote, to be issued in 1980, is causing deep concern. So far, in smaller denominations, we have the Queen, Newton and Florence Nightingale – worthy, perhaps, but a trifle dull. Always conscious of minority groups, I thought it socially useful to ask whether they were happy with such suggestions as have been put forward – Sir Francis Drake, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Edward Elgar and, the statutory woman, Mrs Pankhurst.

Dudley Cave, of *Gay Switchboard,* was firm in rejecting them all. He would like Edward Carpenter or, failing that, J. A. Symonds, who collaborated with Havelock Ellis on the first book about homosexuality, *Sexual Inversion in Men*, a work so scandalous in its time that his literary executor, Horatio Brown, bought up the first edition and burned it.

LIFE, the Catholic anti-abortion society, was a bit confused. Mrs Nuala Scarisbrick, its secretary, started off with Elizabeth Fry, but found her a bit boring. She suggested Evelyn Waugh – a noted Catholic, and polyphiloprogenitive to boot – and General Booth of the Salvation Army, 'a positive force for good.'

The Communist Party of Great Britain was surprisingly open-minded. I expected Marx, Engels, or even Harry Pollitt, but no. 'Mohammed Ali would be *lovely*', said Reuben Falber, assistant secretary of the CP. 'I suppose I ought to say Cromwell or Keir Hardie or any of those progressive things, but I'll stick with Ali. Actually, what I'd *really* like to see is more banknotes.'

☐ An atheist (probably the result of having been variously brought up as Primitive *Methodist, Congregationalist* and *Baptist,* depending on which boys I fancied at the time), I always felt a bit guilty about acting as god-mother to my friends' children. 'You never *know*,' they persuade me, 'Look on it as an insurance policy, just in case.' I was therefore heartened to find that the first complete stereo recording in English of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, coming out just in time for Easter, is by courtesy, Decca says, 'of the enlightened involvement of the Sun Life Assurance Society, Ltd.' It was only possible to proceed with such a project, Decca went on, if there were an expectation of high sales from all over the world, but this was unlikely from non-English speaking countries. 'So it was the Sun Life's generous sponsorship enabled us to procced!' *Fiat Lux.*

Ruth Hall

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ In the shop where I work we were Helping Make Children Happy until someone stole our collecting box. The policeman who came to investigate the theft told me it's a very common one: 'We have to deal with about one a week; the last was a Spastics box about two feet high,' he said, as I stood quivering with indignation. This example of decadence and decay almost makes me feel like joining the Conservatives. – Letter in *Evening Standard* (Steve Pinder)

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LETTERS to the EDITOR

Paying for genocide

Sir, I should correct two recent points before they become part of the record. First, Patrick Wintour mentioned in his article on the TUC International Department (NS 2 March) that Britain gives aid to Argentina. We do not.

Second, Eritrea, on which Mary Dines wrote to you a few weeks ago (NS 19 January). We are as determined to make as full a contribution to relief work there as we can. But we have to work through the International Committee of the Red Cross. On our behalf the ICRC is dividing our assistance equally between the two sides of the conflict. Without the consent of the government for this operation we would be unable to help with equally terrible suffering caused by famine elsewhere in Ethiopia. Our concern is reflected by the further commitment of £1m to the ICRC's latest appeal for Africa.

JUDITH HART

Ministry of Overseas Development

John Pilger and Mary Dines reply on Eritrea: Judith Hart's letter makes no sense and demonstrates either her lamentable ignorance of events in the Horn of Africa, or her willingness to side with the Soviet-sponsored regime in Ethiopia.

Mrs Hart says the Overseas Development Ministry is 'determined to make as full a contribution to relief work (in Eritrea) as we can'. How can this be possible while the Ministry refuses to help those who are trying to aid the great majority of the Eritrean people? We refer to the Eritrean Relief Association, which covers most of free Eritrea. On 20 October a Ministry official wrote to War on Want that Britain did not recognise the Eritrean Relief Association 'or similar organisations'. The Eritrean Relief Association, the humanitarian wing of the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front, remains the *only* Eritrean relief channel through which aid *can go directly and efficiently to the war zones and* to most of the refugees.

Mrs Hart says her Ministry must work through the International Committee of the Red Cross. The ICRC are currently dividing supplies equally between the Eritrean Red Cross and Red Crescent, which now function mostly in sparsely populated areas occupied largely by the Ethiopian army, and the Eritrean Relief Association. This means that fifty per cent of aid reaches less than thirty per cent of the people.

Mrs Hart says, astonishingly, that 'on our behalf the ICRC is dividing assistance between the two aides in the conflict'. What does this mean? Does the ICRC believe that the EPLF and the Eritrean Liberation Front are on different sides? If not, who are the victims on the Ethiopian side? The Eritreans are not invading Ethiopia or harming civilians in any way. The Eritreans are not bombing Ethiopia, with napalm and cluster bombs, or defoliating Ethiopian crops with poisons. How could they? They have no planes. The Eritreans have not enlisted a Great Power to fight on their behalf, as the Ethiopians have done. The only Ethiopian casualties are the soldiers who have been sent to Eritrea. Is the ICRC, on Britain's behalf, sending medical supplies to the Soviet-led Ethiopian army? If so, the British public needs urgently to know.

Mrs Hart's argument about famine is nonsense. Famine has been caused by unyielding drought, combined with the inability of the Ethiopian Government to organise its internal affairs effectively. No doubt part of the reason for Ethiopia's agricultural failure rests with the policy of forcing whole communities of peasants into the 'red army', in order to fight in Eritrea and Ogaden. A poor country like Ethiopia simply cannot afford to feed such a large army, without denying food to its civilian population.

Mrs Hart refers to famine 'elsewhere in Ethiopia'. Has she not heard that there is also famine in Eritrea? Has she not heard that starving people become easy prey to diseases, and that these diseases cannot be checked in Eritrea because countries like Britain send only driblets of medical help? The truth is that Britain's aid to Ethiopia, on its present scale, contributes to a war effort run by a discredited military junta and orchestrated by the Soviet Union. Britain, and Judith Hart, can sift only shame from all of this; that there is a small rebellion in her Ministry against official neglect of the Eritreans, a people fighting for their lives, indicates conscience has not yet officially expired.

Not a toady

Sir, I thought Patrick Wintour knew me better (NS 23 March). Is it now to be NS policy that anyone who agrees with anything the government does is to be labelled a 'toady'? As Patrick knows very well, since I was elected in 1974, I have, amongst other things:

Fought the government up hill and down dale in the most public way on its policy of handing the power plant industry over to Sir Arnold Weinstock to the great annoyance of ministers from the Prime Minister down and with the welcome support of the NEW STATESMAN (remember?);

Participated in the Select Committee hearings on the Steel Industry which very nearly produced ministerial resignations at the Department of Industry;

Advocated in your columns (does the NS not even keep cuttings from itself?) radical reforms of parliament which are as inimical to the Prime Minister as they are to the Lord President.

If the NS thinks that is 'supine-job-seeking' all I can say is it has been very unsuccessful to date! Perhaps I should have kept quiet and depended on the patronage system but then, as Patrick knows, I am on record as being as against that as he is.

MIKE THOMAS

House of Commons

What Labour should do

Sir, In *Labour Activist* we argued for full employment. This means:

(1) Recognising that national governments are weak in relation to multinational industry and banking. The British government must take control of our economy by the use of exchange controls, controls on the growth of imports, the return of law-making powers from Brussels to Westminister, planning agreements, public spending and public ownership.

(2) Recognising that a very powerful ruling group opposes these policies and, by its position in the media, government, business and the City, has successfully misrepresented the situation. A free press, accountable government and workers' control of management are inseparable from our policies for full employment and reindustrialisation.

(3) Our foreign policy should no longer be a craven echo of the consensus thinking of the Western Alliance but should support democratic self-determination both for Britain and others, and planning of trade to assist the Third World.

John Cartwright (NS 16 March) and the other Chicago Boys in the Manifesto Group want to balance the national books. They stand for control of inflation by an incomes policy and restricted public expenditure and money supply — in other words unemployment of two million and rising by the early 1980s, with the North Sea oil money squandered on imported manufactures we cannot afford. Britain's heritage of unreconstructed Toryism rises up to haunt us from the 1920s and 1930s in that banker's view of the British economy.

John Cartwright writes: 'Real living standards last year went up by 8 per cent; how can many of this winter's pay claims seriously be described as defensive?' Easily. In the previous three years living standards had *fallen* 7 per cent and most groups of workers before that had been waging a precarious struggle to keep up with inflation. He goes on to reject *Labour Activist*'s call for an increase of £3 billion per annum in public spending on the grounds that we could not finance it from growth; we would have to increase government borrowing and thus push up interest rates or print more money, which would accelerate inflation and make unemployment worse. This is rubbish. We *can* finance public expenditure from socially responsible growth. The arithmetic is that 4 per cent growth – which should be Labour's target – will yield a £3,500 million a year increase in public revenue without putting up taxes. Together with North Sea oil revenues this is more than adequate for the expenditure we demand. Should it not prove sufficent, however, we could always reintroduce an effective system of corporation tax – which at the moment, despite a notional rate of 52 per cent, actually accounts for only about 5 per cent of company profits.

Many people believe that the British economy cannot, for some mysterious reason, grow. In fact its growth is always stopped by government action as a result of, or in anticipation of, a balance of payments crisis. This is known as stop go. Controls on the growth of imports and capital outflows specifically deal with this problem.

John Cartwright complains: 'We're asked to pin our faith on nationalisation and compulsory planning agreements without being told what they will achieve, or how.' He asks plaintively: 'How do we industrialise?' Let us explain. Every large company has a confidential corporate plan which outlines the plans for expansion and contraction of that company in the light of its own best commercial interest. The company may, for example, have decided to invest in the UK, not to invest at all, or to close plant in the UK and invest in Holland and Germany. Government industrial policy, such as it is, plays no part in the company's thinking, save as a source of subsidy. This is what we mean when we say that government is weak and multinational companies are in fact planning our economic and industrial future. And those companies, by investing abroad and not here, have planned our decline over the past 20 years.

We wish by democratic means to strengthen the government, which represents the people's interests, and to strengthen representatives of workers in each company so that they can have their full say in the formation of a corporate plan. Planning agreements should be what they say: planning by agreement through negotiation between government, unions and management. But there must be an obligation on big business to negotiate.

Finally, John Cartwight once again warns that controls on the growth of imports won't work because Britain is bound to suffer retaliation. This unpatriotic blackmail is virtually an incitement to the EEC, Japan and our industrial competitors to insist that the UK bankrupts itself by buying too many of their goods.

Andrew Glyn, in the same issue of the NS, believes that world capitalism is seeking to restore profitability by high unemployment, intended to hold down wages and pave the way for rationalisation. Governments have no choice, in his view, but to implement policies consistent with the interests of the capitalist class which controls the means of production and the financial system.

John Cartwright's description of Britain's situation is complacent; Andrew Glyn's is deeply pessimistic. But for this, their analyses have much in common and many of their reasons for rejecting *Labour Activist* proposals are identical. Their solutions are diametrically opposed. Cartwright tells us to abandon socialism, Glyn to abandon democracy. According to Glyn, 'the authority of a parliamen-

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tary majority will never make the business and financial community accept the directives of a Labour government.' We would put this question to Andrew Glyn: if the measures which *Labour Activist* proposed, backed by the moral legitimacy of a democratic mandate, would automatically be frustrated by the capitalist class in Britain and abroad, then how could his proposals possibly be carried through? On his own argument they could only be achieved by undemocratic means.

TONY BANKS
BOB CRYER
STUART HOLLAND
CHRIS MULLIN
STUART WEIR
AUDREY WISE

Labour Activist

Chinese retaliation

Sir, Joseph Needham (*Letters* 9 March) supported Communist China when it was quarantined by US imperialism and Peking was unfashionable in the West. So I am glad that he evaluates my article on the invasion of Vietnam (NS 23 February) as 'probably credible', now that Teng Hsiao-ping has taken up the banner of John Foster Dulles and attempts to quarantine Vietnam.

He is right that during the war with America the Vietnamese government evaluated China's aid as equal to the USSR's. They continue to insist on this point today, and refuse to give a dollar value to either. After the Paris treaty in 1973, however, Peking cut off all military aid to Vietnam, despite the Thieu government's initially successful attacks on liberated regions throughout the South. This was part of China's agreement with Nixon.

Hence my point that in 1975 'it must have seemed ludicrous to the Vietnamese that the USSR should be regarded as the main enemy when it had been the major [*I did not write* 'main'] source of support'. Does Joseph Needham think that the USSR was Vietnam's main enemy?

His second point is that the expulsion of Hoa – Vietnamese of Chinese descent – 'was a factor in the origins of the border conflict'. If my article has any credibility the dispute is more than a border issue. If Needham is suggesting that the expulsions were a significant *cause* the answer is probably 'no', for war had already been declared openly at the end of December 1977. Three months later, after its peace offer had been declined, Hanoi, I speculated, decided to prepare for a war they saw as emanating from Peking. Since I wrote my article this dating has been confirmed in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*.

Hanoi claims that the 180,000 refugees left as a result of rumours and panic caused by Peking. The official Chinese explanation is that the rumours were Vietnamese inspired and that the Hoa were expelled. There seems to be ample evidence that the People's Republic did inspire a campaign; furthermore a vital population of highly skilled Hoa miners left Vietnam, with very damaging effects on the country's exports: it seems most unlikely that they were expelled. But at least two other communities probably were. Ethnic Chinese from fishing villages off Haiphong, a site of some strategic importance, and farmers from the area behind Mong Cai (as it juts into China) were expelled after Peking had demonstrated its ability to manipulate their loyalties. Half of the refugees came from the latter area, which was one of last month's invasion routes. Needham skilfully reflects the official Chinese position that Hanoi has been ungrateful and provocative. It seems more likely that it was acting in self-defence.

As both sides have published extensive and bitter documentation on the subject of the Hoa, perhaps I can add that there is one principle to be borne in mind. For Peking, Hoa born in Vietnam of parents born in Vietnam should *not* be citizens of Vietnam. Hanoi, of course, insists that they are its citizens. One index of the strength of its position, which would be shared by any other government in the world today including China's, is that Vietnam has included Chinese statements in its 'dossier' on the matter. The Chinese once published Soviet statements, during the polemic of 1963. On this occasion it is they who have not published the arguments of the other side.

ANTHONY BARNETT

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Vietnam at the movies

Sir, If Philip French (Letters 16 March) was hurt by my poem, I am equally pained by his gullibility. A critic has no excuse for being taken in by a glossy lie. Only the blind would regard the American war in Vietnam as anything but an obscenity. *The Deer Hunter* is a continuation of that war by other, and more profitable, means. Mr French's failure to see past the bluebottle sheen into the sadism and sentimentality which lie at the core of the film is our misfortune, as well as his. Technique is not enough – nor is innocence.

ROGER WODDIS

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London N13

Sir, In John Pilger's review of Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* (*NS* 16 March) one can find only the bitterness of an ageing Vietnam journalist bent on recapturing the moral splendour of his anti-American days. Not only does he misconstrue the intent of the film, he commits the unpardonable sin of confusing a film with its public response. That some Americans may find redemption in the film and cheer the M-16 spraying of the 'gooks' is indeed indicative of a dangerous rennaissance of mindless patriotism, but to attribute such sentiment to the film is to misrepresent the entire picture. Cimino's perceived conversion of 'truth into lie' is in fact Pilger's confusion of metaphor with actual historical events.

The roots of this confusion can be seen in Pilger's search for a real game of Russian roulette. This terrifying game of chance was never intended to be a recreation of actual events; it was chosen as a metaphor for the individual's involvement in Vietnam. For Nick, Stevie and Mike, their Vietnamese experience collapsed into a grand scale game of roulette, a senseless game where defeat is death and victory merely survival. How John Pilger can find American patriotism in the midst of such metaphoric castigation escapes me.

But to dwell on the Vietnamese aspect of the film is not fair to its director. For *The Deer Hunter* is not a documentary about Vietnam (as Pilger's quote from Cimino demonstrates), it is an exploration of the American sense of community. As an American, I am strengthened by the sense of community that can survive even the most shattering of experiences. I have lived through 'the nightmare of Vietnam' and emerged intact, held together by many of the elements so accurately portrayed in *The Deer Hunter*. For me, as for all other Americans, it is impossible to forget Vietnam, but it is equally impossible to forget what it is to be an American who has survived Vietnam. The scars and the deaths will never be forgotten, but our hearts shall beat on. That is what *The Deer Hunter* is really about.

MARK HAYNES DANIELL

University College
Oxford

Sir, John Pilger's article on *The Deer Hunter* (*NS* 16 March) is quite correct: the film is a lie, especially when it tries to tell us that everything comes up roses for those 'squaddies' given a medical discharge from the services minus a leg or arm. Just you try and get to a top-flat Glasgow tenement in a wheel-chair. See how meagre are your prospects of getting employment when you 'hirple' (that expressive Scottish word) in to visit a prospective employer, waving a stump instead of an arm like everyone else.

The Deer Hunter would have been an honest movie if it had tried to portray the despair kindled in the hearts of sorely crippled men desperate for work to try and maintain some semblance of respect, yet refused by employers who give polite coughs, and avert their eyes in embarrassment as they say they will let you know by post.

There must be a constant supply of cannon-fodder, ready to step into the gap left by those who have been blown out of it in previous wars. Any movie which showed how ex-squaddies are treated by faceless men (and women) in the Civil Service would possibly diminish the zeal of future generations for the awful game of war, and we can't have that, can we?

H. C. MULLIN

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Sir, May I, as an American, express gratitude for John Pilger's review of *The Deer Hunter*? Mr Pilger has shown it up for what it actually is – an ignoble attempt to get the US off the hook of moral responsibility for Vietnam. Those English reviewers who have praised the film to the skies have done the United States no service, for guilt about that blot on our escutcheon needs to be faced up to and acknowledged. It cannot be dissolved away by constructing a fake mythology.

MARGARET HALSEY

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Who abolished slavery?

Sir, There are one or two other details about Castlereagh's performance at the Congress of Vienna which Paul Foot should have passed on to your readers (London Diary, NS 23 March). Castlereagh secured from the powers an unprecedented declaration condemning the slave trade, thus laying the foundation for its international outlawry. He induced Sweden and Holland to outlaw it for their subjects. In 1817 Castlereagh got abolition treaties out of Spain and Portugal, and it was largely his activity that gave Napoleon the idea of abolishing the French trade in an attempt to placate British opinion during the Hundred Days (his example was followed by Louis XVIII on his return). Castlereagh also induced Holland and Spain to concede a limited right of search to the ships of the Royal Navy. In short, he did as much as any Englishman, save for Wilberforce and Clarkson themselves, to put the Atlantic slave trade on the way to extinction.

It is in this context that his alleged promise not to abolish slavery itself must be interpreted. Castlereagh of course would have known that such a promise was altogether valueless: he could not possibly be sure of controlling Parliament or the Cabinet on such a point; but if it helped to end the slave trade, by assuaging the fears of continental reactionaries, it was worth making. However, what is Mr Foot's authority for asserting that Castlereagh made any such promise? And what is his authority for the equally unlikely assertion that Castlereagh established a torture chamber in Dublin Castle and relished the screams of its victims? And is he ever going to apologise for his libels on the memory of Wilberforce? He has now had several weeks in which to do so.

University of Essex
Colchester
HUGH BROGAN

CORRECTION: In last week's article 'How good schools can change children', we stated that Janet Ouston assisted in Professor Michael Rutter's research study *Fifteen Thousand Hours*. She was in fact one of the principal collaborators on the project along with Michael Rutter, Peter Mortimore and Barbara Maughan. Janet Ouston is a psychologist, specialising in research on child development, and is now doing further research work on Inner London secondary schools.

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FIRST PERSON
Arthur Marshall

Don't Dilly Dally

Those of us who have been worrying ourselves into fiddle-strings over the disintegrating Skylab above our heads, the known details of which I hastened to pass on to you a week or so ago, must still go right on worrying. We who have been diligently praying to the Almighty for further information, preferably of a reassuring kind, about this peril from the skies have been vouchsafed a direct answer to prayer. Those who pray regularly will know only too well that by no means all answers to prayer are agreeable and this one is no exception, though it does start off in a misleadingly cheering manner. A delightful American reader from the New York area has sent me a cutting from her newspaper to the effect that a group of Washington computer experts have put their heads and their computers together and, quaintly calling themselves Chicken Little Associates, are going to make continuous computer estimates as to exactly where Skylab, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's orbiting laboratory that is now superfluous to requirements, is going to descend in dangerous smithereens to earth.

Restrain at once your sighs of relief. There is little here for your comfort. First of all, to register as a recipient of the latest computer gen you have to stump up the equivalent of £50 a month in order to get news of the 'risk pattern' and the likelihood of the contraption zooming lethally down in your vicinity. The satellite's orbit has been, in the technical term, 'decaying' rapidly and the shower of metallic wreckage may be expected to arrive 'some time between July and September' and ideally timed to ruin everybody's hols. As the Skylab's orbits cover the entire earth between 50 degrees north and 50 degrees south, most of the world's major cities are theoretically in its range. At the very most, an hour's warning may be expected. And even with those computers whirring round, it is plain that nobody has the faintest idea of what is going to happen. Personally, I'm hanging on to my £50.

So much for the experts. It is the old old story when we are hot for certainties – 'No one can tell me. Nobody knows.' A quotation from where, you ask yourself? Theatre buffs should be pricking up their ears for it comes from the land of paint and powder. It was in a pleasing little 'encore' number in a revue of the 1920s, wistfully sung by the highly talented thistledown *danseuse* and vocalist called Mimi Crawford, as pretty as a picture and much in theatrical demand (she exists, alas, no more). It was not of course to the exact position of the Skylab that Miss Crawford was here referring but to the wind. 'No one can tell me. Nobody knows,' she sang, 'where the wind comes from, where the wind goes.' Not strictly accurate, perhaps, as the origin and destination of some winds are woefully and noisily clear, but the number's general message is obvious to all and it gave Miss Crawford, the singing once over, a chance to twiddle and twirl most charmingly. She married an Earl (an extremely brave wartime UXB victim) and became the Countess of Suffolk.

She did more besides. When, a number of months ago, I wrote about Goethe's poor old mother and bewailed the fact that so few people could in the last few years have been thinking of the dear old soul and how distressing a retreat into such total obscurity was, I got a letter from a lady in Reading to say that as it happens she had been thinking of Frau Goethe 'only this morning', though what had sparked off this fruitful train of thought she did not mention. There are much better grounds for recently remembering Miss Crawford for it was she who sang, in the revue *Many Happy Returns* at the Duke of York's in 1928, the number whose chorus went 'I've danced with a man who's danced with a girl who's danced with the Prince of Wales,' the song which formed such a feature of that superb 'Edward and Mrs Simpson' ITV series. The lyrics made originally something of a stir as they were thought to be in pretty bad taste. Written by the superbly gifted Herbert Farjeon, the song's verse began merrily with 'My word I've had a party, my word I've had a spree' but it was frostily received on the first night, attacked by the Daily Mail and, even though the Prince graciously stated that he had no objections, the number was subsequently withdrawn from the revue, the 'Theatre World' magazine clicking its tongue in dismay and announcing its stupefaction, a feeling shared by many of the rest of us, that 'this infectious little song, so daintily rendered by Miss Crawford, could possibly annoy anybody'.

Such fastidiousness about the possible hurting of royal feelings did not always obtain in the last century. Queen Victoria, hearing a catchy tune being played by a military band on the terrace at Windsor, sent to enquire what the title of it might be and had to be informed that the piece was called 'Come Where the Booze is Cheaper'. In the song 'Burlington Bertie from Bow', a very popular number invariably performed by male impersonators such as Ella Shields and Hetty King, there was, if memory serves, a line which went 'The Prince of Wales' brother says come and meet mother', which conjured up a delightful picture of a cosy Palace *tête-à-tête* between the queen and this down-at-heel man-about-town, bravely struggling to keep up appearances in reduced circumstances and collecting his cigar ends from the Strand's gutters. And despite the existence of songs such as 'Send for Mother, Birdie's Dying' and 'Ring the Bell Softly, There's Crêpe on the Door', a tremendous jolliness was everywhere in the entertainment world, as Patrick Beaver splendidly reminds us in *The Spice of Life* (Elm Tree Books, £7.95), an excellent review of the assorted pleasures of the Victorian age.

However disagreeable life must have been for many, the Victorians, rich and poor, at least knew how to enjoy themselves. Every town of even modest size had its music hall, its fair and regular visits from tenting circuses. Theatres all over the country were filled with touring companies. Above all there was the pantomime (at Christmas in 1853 central London boasted no fewer than fourteen), with Widow Twankey, although resident in 'ancient Peking', making her first entrance riding a wobbly bicycle, and comic royalties called King Hupsydown and King Wrongsydeup and a text so peppered with merry puns (always italicised in print so that nobody can possibly miss the fun) that we find the Peking *blanchisseuse* bewailing her housekeeping deficiencies with

> Like the receptacle of Mrs Hubbard,
> No food can in *dis cupboard* be *discubbard*.

But it was in the music hall, where the subjects sung about were the real basics of life – kippers, drunkenness, patriotism, mothers-in-law, policemen, lodgers, children, infidelity, the seaside, brawls, rent arrears – that the gaiety positively bubbled forth. Assorted titles, sentimental, comical and indecent, tell the whole happy story – 'Boiled Beef and Carrots', 'A little Bit of Cucumber', 'Captain Ginjah' ('I like the ladies, not one of them would I injah'), 'Hit Him on the Boko' ('Dot him on the snitch'), 'The Bower that Stands in Thigh Lane', 'Shall I be an Angel, Daddy?', 'Stand Me a Cab-fare, Duckie', 'The Baby's Name is Kitchener', and so on. One has, of course, one's favourite moment. This for me was in a Billie Merson number called 'The Night I Appeared as Macbeth' and which contained the following:

> I acted so tragic
> The house rose like magic
> The audience cried 'You're sublime';
> They made me a present
> Of Mornington Crescent,
> They threw it a brick at a time.

The London music hall is no more, and more's the pity, but a sort of music hall tradition still continues, I believe, in various pubs (female impersonation a popular item) and, in a rather more slap-up way, in those so-called 'working men's clubs' in the North which always look on the telly splendiferously like reception rooms at the Dorchester. Here there are beer and noise and bonhomie, and the act had better be good.

Roger Woddis

Stuff To Give The Troops

'In the last few years Labour have fed and nourished the worst instincts in the trade union movement.' – Mrs Thatcher.

How doth her iron ladyship
  Reprove trade union power,
And wallop little bees who sip
  The honey from the flower!

How grandly doth she strike a pose!
  How holier-than-thou!
How soundly she belabours those
  With sweat upon their brow!

Could we but imitate her class,
  And give up what we hold,
Then none of us would value brass,
  And all be good as gold.

The winter of our discontent
  Will never change to spring,
While we go on about the rent,
  And every other thing.

How rarely would we pour the wine
  And wear expensive furs,
If all our instincts were as fine
  And spiritual as hers!

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'Solid Geometry' by Ian McEwan

IAN MCEWAN *writes*: On Wednesday, 21 March, I set out for Television Centre to meet the producer and director of my play. We had heard the day before that the BBC were thinking of scrapping *Solid Geometry*, and we were due to record in four days. We were converging on TV Centre (the play was being made in Birmingham) to hear from Alasdair Milne, Managing Director, Television, the precise nature of the BBC's objections, and to do all we could to rescue the play. By the time we arrived, however, the BBC had already issued a statement to the press to the effect that 'after considerable discussion' a halt had been called to 'early' rehearsals of a play which, because of the sexually explicit nature of its material, was considered unsuitable for transmission 'even at a late hour'. Milne was too busy to meet us and we spoke instead to Sean Sutton, Head of Drama Group, the man nominally responsible for the decision. It was a meeting of friendly handshakes, wistful smiles, embarrassed shrugs – my first intimation that fighting the BBC is like punching the breeze. The decision was not defended; it was pleasantly but awkwardly conveyed. The distinct impression was given that it originated elsewhere, and also, somehow . . . that it did not.

We were asked what we intended to do and we said we had no choice but to put our case to the press. We need not have bothered. An hour later, while we were still mulling over the wording of our own press release, the BBC were making it known to curious journalists that the opening shot of the play called for a close up of two jars on a mantelpiece containing male and female genitals, and that the play contained 'grotesque and bizarre sex scenes'. It was clear that with the recent suppression of plays by Barry Keefe, Roy Minton and Dennis Potter, the BBC had sharpened up its propaganda techniques – get there first and *misrepresent*. The following day I was invited to talk about the banning of the play on the Radio 4 arts programme *Kaleidoscope*. I gladly accepted. But several hours before the programme was due to go out the editor phoned to say that since no BBC official was willing or able to defend the decision to scrap the play the item would have to be dropped. 'Isn't that still further censorship?' I said limply into the phone. No, came the answer, it was *balance*.

The cancellation of *Solid Geometry* was not designed to protect viewers from radical political ideas, nor from excessive violence; it seems to have arisen from smaller notions of respectability. One or two executives in the BBC just *know* that a penis in a specimen jar is rude; whatever the dramatic context, it will offend. I was told informally that it was felt that the line 'My period has started. I need to get something' would be 'offensive to middle-class ladies'. Leaving aside the menstrual paranoia of middle-class male BBC administrators, it seems time that the use of this word 'offensive', and all its attendant Podsnappery, was either broadened or dropped altogether as a criterion for censorship. I am probably not the only one who finds a lot of television programmes offensively trivial or condescending. I do not expect them to be banned.

Television drama is too important to be subject to the susceptibilities of one or two administrators. The cumulative experience of recently banned plays indicates that there should be clearer, less idiosyncratic and paternalistic ways of deciding what is 'untransmittable' – one of the words used to describe my play. There must be more people involved in these decisions, and some of them should be programme makers. At the very least there should be a right of appeal against what is considered to be unfair or arbitrary censorship.

On the same day that *Solid Geometry* was cancelled, Alasdair Milne was telling a press conference, presumably without irony, that 'there is no place for draconian imperatives in a creative medium'. There are many employed at the BBC, administrators as well as production staff, who feel they are working in a demoralised organisation. It is so huge now that the interests of those who administrate are no longer necessarily the same as those who make programmes. The sudden and high-handed suppression of productions without full discussion with those involved, without at least exploring ways round difficulties, furthers that demoralisation by creating a bitter atmosphere of 'them' and 'us'. It is time now for them to meet us and work out a better way of doing things.

1: 1875, A Country Auction

A lull between bids. Among the small crowd of men grouped near the auctioneer's lectern we find but do not linger on Maxwell and Greatgrandfather. Maxwell is in his mid-forties. A self-taught man, a poseur, self-consciously a 'man of the world' whose essential innocence alongside Greatgrandfather's looks like urbanity. That is why Maxwell needs him. Greatgrandfather is a little older. A man of shifting enthusiasms whose intelligence far outstrips his wisdom. A compulsive theoriser who has experienced very little of the world outside his study. That is why he needs Maxwell.

The auctioneer's gaze combs the room.

Auctioneer: Have all the ladies now departed from the sales room? Have . . . Yes? Very well then gentlemen, we may begin. Gentlemen, if you please.

Two assistants stand on either side of the auctioneer, each holding a sealed glass jar. The auctioneer gestures left.

Auctioneer: This anatomical curiosity, gentlemen, was once the living property of one Capt. Nicholls who died in Horsemonger Jail in 1835. I have it on absolute authority that the good, late doctor severed the part only *minutes after death*, not, as wild, irresponsible rumour puts out, minutes before. And thus you see it gentlemen, preserved for the furtherance of natural science and the edification of medical students. *(Greatgrandfather and Maxwell edge their way to the front of the crowd.)* It measures a little under 12 inches and, as you may observe, gentlemen, it is in a beautiful state of preservation. A most virtuous and scientific item. The bidding starts at ten shillings.

GGF, wild and boyish, is now at the front of the crowd, right beneath the lectern, straining forward to examine the penis in the jar. Maxwell stands a little behind him. Hand touching his shoulder as if to restrain him.

GGF: Look at that Maxwell! Wonderful, quite wonderful. I must have it . . . Three guineas!

Crowd murmurs.

Maxwell: My dear friend, not so quickly.
Auctioneer: Three guineas, I hear three guineas, three guineas, three guineas, four guineas, four guineas . . .

GGF: Seven guineas!

Ad-lib bidding to fourteen guineas.

GGF: Eighteen guineas!
Auctioneer: 18 guineas, I hear 18, 18 guineas, 18, 18 guineas, 18, 18, 18 guineas . . . sold to the gentleman in front of me.

GGF embraces Maxwell.

Auctioneer: Passing to the item on my right; delicacy, gentlemen, inhibits a full description. The . . . unnamed portion of the late Lady Barrymore, secured and preserved by the family physician with the permission of her closest relatives.

GGF and Maxwell have moved across to examine the second jar. Unlike the first, its contents cannot be seen. The liquid is too murky.

GGF: Maxwell, what an excellent set the pair would make.
Maxwell: I'm not so certain.
Auctioneer: A priceless item with aristocratic connections, the bidding commences at five guineas.
GGF: It can be none other than the female counterpart to Captain Nicholls.
Maxwell: I urge you not to bid.
Auctioneer: Five guineas, five guineas . . .
GGF: I see them now, side by side above the fire place.

GGF tries to raise his arm to attract the auctioneer's attention. Maxwell restrains him.

Maxwell: It's badly preserved, whatever it is, and therefore quite worthless.
GGF: But the set. Maxwell, the set.
Maxwell: Please take my advice. It's badly done, utterly worthless.

Long shot. Maxwell ushers the protesting GGF through the crowd. Ad lib bidding has proceeded meanwhile to 30 guineas.

Auctioneer: 30 guineas. I am bid 30 guineas. 30 guineas . . . and sold to our dear friend Mr Sam Israel. A handsome acquisition, sir.

2: GGF's study

Book-lined, book strewn. A clock ticks heavily. A coal fire burns in the grate. GGF eats alone at a table set in the centre of the room. Later, GGF sits at his writing desk. A couple of mathematical treatises lie open (next to sealed jar). He turns a leather-bound diary to a fresh page and writes.

GGF: (VO) October 10, 1875. This morning I read with great pleasure Mr Malthus's pamphlet of 1798 entitled 'On the Principle of Population'. I find I am in a position *(pauses and glances round the room)* to endorse wholly his conclusions. During the afternoon, in the company of my beloved friend M, I attended the auction at Melton Mowbray and there purchased the most extraordinary thing . . .

Voice fades. The open pages of the diary glow.

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Surrounding objects darken.

3: The same diary, a different table, one hundred years later

Very early morning. Bird song and distant traffic. We pull away from the diary and discover the apparatus of scholarship — card indexes, reference volumes, a typewriter, a jar of pencils and pens, and a great number of similar diaries set with their spines upright along the back of the table and ranging (the dates inscribed upon the spines) from 1865 to 1899. We see the penis in the jar catching the early-morning sunlight and we become aware of Maisie's voice from the bedroom next door. She is muttering in her sleep. Maisie's mutterings become desperate, nightmare-ridden shouts.

4: Bedroom

It is in semi-darkness. Maisie wakes from her nightmare, sits up and turns on the light. Maisie is in her late twenties, a product and to some extent a victim of the Sixties — unfocused ambitions, reflective in a self-destructive way. But she has warmth — and must be sympathetic. At her side, lying on his back with his eyes closed, is Albert. Thirtyish, self-absorbed: somewhere in his mind he has left his wife far behind. Eerily cold. (Usually, both Albert and Maisie wear round, wire-rimmed glasses.) Maisie attempts to pull Albert's arm free of the bedclothes and drape it round her shoulders. Albert is not helpful.

Albert: What now?
Maisie: It was a terrible dream. A nightmare.
Albert: (without opening his eyes) Really?
Maisie: It was the one I had before. I was in a plane flying over a desert. But it wasn't really a desert. I made the plane go lower and I could see there were thousands of babies heaped up, stretching away to the horizon, all of them naked and climbing over each other. I was running out of fuel and I had to land the plane. I had to find a space, I flew on and on, looking for a space.

(No reason to believe that Albert is listening to this. His eyes remain closed throughout.)

Maisie: It was so frightening, Al.

Albert yawns and turns on his side.

Albert: It was only a dream. Go to sleep now.
Maisie: No! I daren't go to sleep, not just yet.
Albert: Well I have to go to sleep. I have to get up in an hour.
Maisie: Please don't go to sleep yet. Don't leave me here.
Albert: I'm in the same bed for Chrissakes.
Maisie: Please don't leave me awake, please don't leave me awake.

Albert's eyes close.

5: The bathroom. Day

Albert sits on the lavatory, fully-dressed. On his knees he balances a hard-cover journal in which he is making a diary entry. He pauses. The bathtap drips. He continues to write.

6: Sitting room. Day

Maisie in a yoga position.

7: Albert's study

Albert is at his desk sorting through one of his card files. He picks out one of the diaries, dated 1877, and by referring to the card file finds the page he wants. We read:

June 3. Tuesday, and as usual, my dear friend M to dinner.

The page glows whiter . . .

8: . . . The same diary on GGF's writing desk.

Across the room in armchairs are GGF and Maxwell, lighting after-dinner cigars.

Maxwell: (A little drunk, a little pompous) I'm something of a scholar myself, in these matters at least — as all men-of-the-world should be.
GGF: Maxwell, your erudition in a number of fields is a constant source of surprise and pleasure to me.
Maxwell: Experience untempered . . . unseasoned . . . by serious reflection and scholarship counts for nothing in the end, a hollow sham.
GGF: You put it nicely.
Maxwell: So I am able to inform you with considerable authority that the Church has always taken a dim view.
GGF: Of course.
Maxwell: Theodore, the 7th-century theologian . . .
GGF: Ah yes, Theodore!
Maxwell: Theodore believed it a sin equal to . . . self-abuse . . .
GGF: Onanism!
Maxwell: Precisely, and therefore worth 40 penances.
GGF: Indeed, but for which particular transgression?
Maxwell: My dear friend! For proceeding with a member of the fair sex . . . *a posteriori.*
GGF: Of course, I had quite forgotten.
Maxwell: However, and this is my point . . .

There is a knock at the door. The two men become immobilised in mid-gesture.

Maisie: (VO) How's it going? I've brought you some tea.

We pull away to find the diary on GGF's desk. In the background the two men out of focus.

Maisie: (VO) It's Earl Grey, your favourite.

9: The same diary on Albert's desk. Day

Albert: (without turning round) Oh, yes. Great. Put it there.
Maisie: I've made a cake too.
Albert: Oh.

Maisie sets down her tray on the floor behind Albert and kneels down beside it. She cuts the cake and hands Albert his tea.

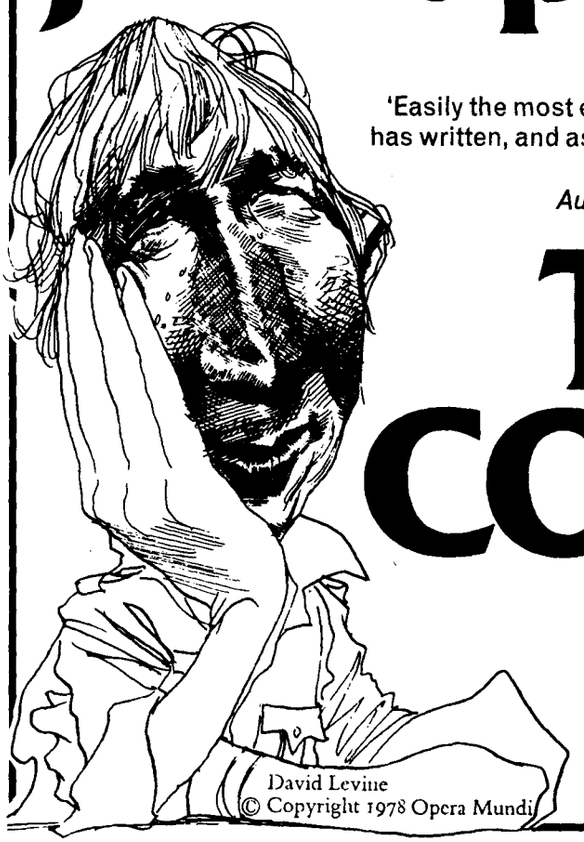
Maisie: How are you getting on?
Albert: All right.
Maisie: Solved the mystery of Maxwell's disappearance yet?
Albert: (through a sigh) Nope.
Maisie: Very strange, vanishing just like that. Perhaps he smoked too much opium. I had this dream last night that was very strange too. I was trying to fly this plane over a kind of desert, only it wasn't really . . .
Albert: Maisie, not now. Can't you see I'm in the middle of something here.

Maisie leaves the study in silent fury. Albert takes a slice of cake and returns to the diary.

10: The diary . . . GGF's study

GGF: Of course, I had quite forgotten.
Maxwell: However, and this is my point, advanced scientific opinion on the Continent poses a contrary attitude and insists that *a posteriori* is the most *natural* way.
GGF: Indeed.
Maxwell: And once more the Church is wholly discredited by Science. As evidence the scientists cite, in the first instance, the position of the clitoris itself.
GGF: A very good point!
Maxwell: And in the second, the preferred method of all other anthropoids. They *all* proceed *a posteriori.*
GGF: Remarkable. *(Stands)* An appropriate moment Maxwell to show you some calculations I have made since our last conversation. You will remember that it was my ambition to illuminate what is obscure in human nature and conduct with the penetrating light of mathematics, that most severe taskmaster of all sciences, the finest, most elevated and noble of . . .

John Updike



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Maxwell: Yes, yes.
GGF: (Produces a fat sheaf of mathematical calculations) What less irrelevant then, what more obscure in human conduct than the very act of procreation itself. Given the human form — an irregular lamina which I have expressed in algebraic and geometric terms — and given the spatial alignments prerequisite to the act of generation — which I have calculated into a set of *simultaneous* equations — and given the arc of movement each limb may make at its respective joint . . .
Maxwell: Yes, given all that.
GGF: What then are the maximum number of positions in which the act of marital conjugality may take place? And how may these be expressed mathematically?
Maxwell: But . . .
GGF: This first section demonstrates, by reduction to absurdity, that there can only be a prime number of positions.
Maxwell: But my dear fellow . . .
GGF: And the second proves beyond all doubt that the prime number concerned is 17.

Maxwell breaks into uncontrollable laughter.

11: Albert's study

Albert closes the diary and stands.

12: Sitting room

Cut to Maisie. She sits cross legged on the floor. She finishes rolling a joint. Spread out in front of her is a Tarot card reading. Albert appears behind her, pausing to watch briefly and scornfully. As he passes he treads on a couple of the cards.

13: Bathroom

As before, Albert sits on the lavatory fully-dressed, writing in his journal. The bathroom door handle turns. Maisie knocks, gently at first. Albert goes on writing.

Maisie: How long are you going to be?
Albert: Not long.
Maisie: Open the door. I need to get in there.
Albert: You'll have to wait.
Maisie: (shouting) Let me in. You're not using the toilet.
Albert. Wait.
Maisie: (kicking the door) My period has started. I need to get something.

Albert continues to write. Silence now from the other side of the door. Albert finishes. Maisie is waiting for him.

14: The landing

Maisie hits him over the head with the heel of a shoe. Albert's ear is cut.

Maisie: Now we're both bleeding.

She steps round him into the bathroom and slams the door.

15: The study

Albert finds a tissue for his ear.

The diary.

16: GGF's study

Maxwell laughing.

17: Albert standing outside the bathroom He waits. Shoe in one hand. With the other he nurses his ear. Cut to another shot of the same . . . Time passes. When Maisie steps out Albert catches her on the top of the head with the shoe with far greater force and accuracy than she hit him. Maisie stands still, determined not to appear hurt. But there is a pause before she can speak. She stares at Albert who wilts perceptibly.

Maisie: You worm!

18: GGF's study. Evening

Maxwell finds his voice through his laughter.

Maxwell: Seventeen . . . seventeen . . . excuse me. Scholarship without experience on the other hand . . .
GGF: Could you but understand mathematics.
Maxwell: Travel to our great capital, inquire of the professional ladies who nightly patrol the Haymarket and without hesitation they will tell you 'Forty eight, and if it pleases you to step this way sir . . .'
GGF: Heavens forbid.
Maxwell: As for the scholars, well there's a Mr Forberg who has accounted for 90 positions, and Romano, a pupil of the distinguished Raphael, has made 26 different drawings.
GGF: (leafing through his papers) There could be errors in calculation, or something I failed to take into account.

GGF crosses the study and sets his papers down on the writing-desk. The diary (and sealed jar) is in shot.

Maxwell: (as we close in on diary) Mathematics is, as you say, a pure and noble pursuit, and your own genius is beyond question. But my dear fellow, passion won't be reduced to numbers, it simply won't go . . . *(Voice fades.)*

19: Albert's study

Albert closes the diary and puts it in its place alongside the others. He contemplates Capt. Nicholls.

20: Sitting-room. Evening

Maisie is sitting in an armchair eating her supper. The floor is littered with Tarot cards and books on mysticism. Albert enters with his own plate of food and makes his way to a second armchair.

Maisie: Don't kick my cards all over the place. You could try walking round them you know.
Albert: (knocking a couple of Maisie's books off the armchair) You could try putting the bloody things away for once.
Maisie: I'm half way through a very important reading. And don't throw my books around like that.
Albert: A very important reading!
Maisie: You'd go crazy if I treated your books like that.
Albert: Do you really think this junk is going to sort you out? *(Poking at a card with his foot.)* Hanging from a tree by one leg strongly recommended.
Maisie: Don't be pathetic.
Albert: It beats me how a grown person can take this nonsense seriously.
Maisie: As a matter of fact . . .
Albert: I suppose one consolation is that you'll be 'into' something else soon. Not so long ago you were a dedicated ecologist preparing to save the planet. Before that you were in touch with flying saucers, and before that you were a trainee psychotherapist. What's next? Witchcraft?
Maisie: (brave pretence at calm) It so happens that the Tarot cards are a very ancient system of knowledge which embodies a complete representation of the unconscious.
Albert: Amazing, and the whole thing fits in your back pocket.
Maisie: Centuries of intuitive knowledge held together in a system.
Albert: Intuitive knowledge! In other words mumbo jumbo.
Maisie: A man locked in a cell with only the Tarot cards would have access to all knowledge.
Albert: All knowledge?
Maisie: Provided he knew how to use the cards, yes.
Albert: So using the cards properly could he work out the street plan of Valparaiso?
Maisie: Now you're just being stupid.
Albert: Could he find out the best way to start a laundry business? The best way to make an omelette or a kidney machine?
Maisie: You're so predictable, you're such a drag.
Albert: Could he work out why M disappears from the pages of my greatgrandfather's diary?
Maisie: You're so narrow. Can't you see those are not necessary things?
Albert: They are still knowledge. Could he find them out?
Maisie: (pauses) Yes, he could.

Albert breathes deeply, smiles, and goes on eating.

Maisie: What's so funny? *(Albert shrugs. Maisie's exasperation mounts.)* Why did you ask all those pointless questions?
Albert: I dunno really. I just wanted to know if you really meant *everything*.
Maisie: (shouting) Damn you! Why are you always trying me out? Why can't we have a real conversation about something?

Albert shrugs. Both retreat into bitter silence and continue to eat.

21: 'Stables'

GGF is bent over an elaborate, heavy, brass-knobbed press which has a gauge that reads out pressure. On the floor a bucket of horse dung. (This scene against a black back drop.) GGF makes calculations, consults notes. Maxwell appears behind him.

GGF: (without turning round) I wonder if you remember, Maxwell, a conversation we had several weeks ago. You had just returned from one of your trips to London and you informed me of the extent to which the thoroughfares were fouled by horse dung.
Maxwell: Yes, damn nuisance it is too.
GGF: The general consensus there, so you said, was that certain streets could be totally impassable before long.
Maxwell: That's what the cabbie said who drove me through Mayfair on the way to Lady Mortimer's . . .
GGF: I've gathered certain useful statistics concerning the metropolitan equine population and, following the principles of the great Malthus have assumed a geometric growth in that population . . .
Maxwell: Good Lord!
GGF: And after a careful study of a street plan of the city — help me with this lever — and these experiments to determine the compressibility of the material in question — there, that should do it — I shall be in a position to demonstrate to the world, through the medium of my pamphlet entitled *'De Strecore Equorum'* and by mathematical calculation that the streets of our beloved capital . . .
Maxwell: Which you have never yet visited.
GGF: And never shall — will be utterly impassable by the year 1935. All commercial, artistic and domestic life will be brought to a standstill, the great, good heart of our empire shall cease to beat, the . . .
Maxwell: (taking GGF's elbow) My dear friend, perhaps the time has come for me to tell *you* my own story of mathematics, and of a mysterious, quite unbelievable event. I have held back this last year from telling you, preferring to wait for my moment, and now . . .
GGF: Now indeed, Maxwell! But surely not here in my stables. If it's mathematics and mystery then we must treat the story-teller with some respect. Let me make you comfortable in my study with a bottle of my best claret and, if you require it, a little opium.

They leave and GGF's voice fades. The sound of a door opening. A sudden draught blows GGF's forgotten calculations to the floor. The door slams shut.

22: Albert's study. Early morning

Dissolve to one of the diaries on Albert's desk. Bird song and distant traffic. Sounds, as before, of the gathering momentum of one of Maisie's nightmares.

23: The bedroom

Albert turns on the light. Maisie sits up dazed. Both grope for their glasses.

Albert: Tell me something, Maisie. What is it you really want? Why don't you go back to your job for Chrissakes? All these long walks, self-analysis, sitting around the house, lying in bed all morning, the Tarot pack, the nightmares . . . I mean, what is it you want?
Maisie: (wearily) I want to get my head straight.
Albert: Your head, your mind, it's not like some old

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coat-hanger you know, that you can just bend into the right shape. It's more like a river, moving and changing all the time. And you can't make rivers flow straight.
Maisie: Let's not go through all this again I'm not trying to make rivers flow straight. I'm trying to get my mind straight.
Albert: But you've got to do something. You can't do nothing. Why don't you go back to work? You never had nightmares when you were working, you were never as unhappy as this when you were working.
Maisie: I've got to stand back from all that. I'm not sure what any of it means any more.
Albert: (gets out of bed and begins to dress) Fashion, that's all it is, fashion. Fashionable metaphors, fashionable reading, fashionable malaise. What do you care about Jung, for example? You've read 12 pages in a month.
Maisie: Don't say any more. You know it leads nowhere.
Albert: (he has rehearsed this speech carefully) You've never been anywhere, you've never done anything. You're a nice girl without even the blessing of an unhappy childhood. This bed-sit mysticism, joss-stick therapy, none of it's yours, Maisie, you've worked none of it out for yourself. You fell into it, that's what you did. You fell into a swamp of respectable intuitions. You haven't got the originality to intuit anything for yourself beyond your own unhappiness. Why are you filling your mind with other people's mystic banalities and giving yourself nightmares?
Maisie: (close to tears, fighting them down) And why are you trying to make things worse for me? Why do you have to go on and on and on? I feel like you're screwing me up, you know, like a piece of paper.

Pause. Albert is tying his shoelaces. Maisie is sweetly conciliatory.

Maisie: Come over here, Al. Come and sit here. I want to touch you. I want you to touch me . . .

Albert leaves the bedroom with a businesslike sigh.

24: Albert's study

Fifteen minutes later. Albert sits down at his desk with a cup of coffee. The diary in front of him glows . . .

25: GGF's study

Moving away from the diary we find GGF and Maxwell passing an opium pipe between them. A slow-motion, soporific feel about the scene. GGF fills Maxwell's glass. Maxwell settles back in the armchair, eyes half-closed.

Maxwell: (remotely, hesitantly at first) I've kept this story to myself for fear of appearing foolish in the telling . . . but . . .
GGF: But now you may feel secure before a bigger fool!
Maxwell: My dear friend . . . You remember that during my journey across Europe last year I visited Vienna.
GGF: Indeed I do. You gave a glowing account of the city.
Maxwell: What I omitted to tell you was that there came into my possession certain papers which claim — and only *claim*, mind you — to invalidate everything fundamental to our science of solid geometry, and in so doing undermine the whole canon of our physical laws . . . forcing us, in short, to redefine our place in nature's scheme.
GGF: A modest enough claim.
Maxwell: The author of these papers is — or should I say *was* — an obscure young mathematician from the University of Edinburgh, David Hunter. He had arrived in Vienna to read his thesis at an international conference on mathematics. But it was not Hunter who gave me the papers. They were entrusted to me by another young mathematician, an American by the name of Goodman. You'll recall that I corresponded with his father over a number of years in connection with his cyclical theory of menstruation which is still largely discredited in this country.
GGF: Because it's poppycock, that's why.
Maxwell: All the same, the young Goodman, in a state of considerable agitation, gave the papers into my care with instructions that I was to deliver them to David Hunter if I was ever to learn of his whereabouts. Goodman planned to return to America the following day even though the conference had hardly begun. At first he would not tell me why he was leaving so soon, nor would he explain what it was that so greatly disturbed him. But then, and only after much persuasion and insistence on my part, he described what he had witnessed on the third day of the conference.

GGF has relit the opium pipe. Maxwell pauses to receive it. As GGF offers the pipe and Maxwell stretches out his arm to take it . . .

Maisie: (VO) What about you then?

Maxwell and GGF remain fixed in their positions.

Albert: (VO) What?

Scene 26: Albert's study

Through the medium of the diary we are back in Albert's study. Albert raises his head, dazed. Maisie stands in the foorway in her dressing gown. The penis floats unconcernedly in its jar.

Maisie: I said, what about you then? What is it *you* 'really want'? Books! Crawling over the past like a fly on a turd.
Albert: (rallying) Crawling, yes. But at least I'm moving.
Maisie: You can't even speak to me. All you can do is play for points.
Albert: Maisie, go away please.

Maisie hesitates, hurt, and leaves, slamming the door hard. Albert returns to the diary.

27: GGF's study

Maxwell takes the pipe and draws deeply. When he begins to speak again we dissolve slowly through a cloud of exhaled smoke . . .

28: The great hall

Where the mathematicians meet. A long polished table, strewn with papers, etc. Mathematicians seated around it applaud a colleague who stands, a sheaf of papers in his hands, and bows. We find Hunter among the mathematicians — wild, abstracted, Beethovenish look — barely remembering to clap. Huge double doors are flung open and liveried lackeys wheel in refreshments.

Maxwell: (VO) The conference assembled every morning at 9 o'clock. A paper was read and a general discussion ensued, followed by ovations and official citations. Now, the conference lasted two weeks and, by a longstanding arrangement, the most eminent read their papers first, followed by the slightly less eminent and so on, descending through the hierarchy. Hunter was young and virtually unknown outside his university and he was placed to read on the penultimate day of the conference. Hunter, however, was determined to be heard.

The applause fades into a low hum of conversation. The mathematicians rise slowly from the table. Coffee is offered round by the lackeys. Hunter makes his way to the head of the table.

Hunter: Gentlemen . . . gentlemen . . . gentlemen, please. Gentlemen, I must beg you to forgive this irregular form of address. I promise I shall not keep you long. *(Holds up a sheaf of papers.)* Rather than read my proofs to you, I will simply announce their conclusions. Gentlemen, my field is solid geometry. I have discovered, and I have effected the plane without a surface.

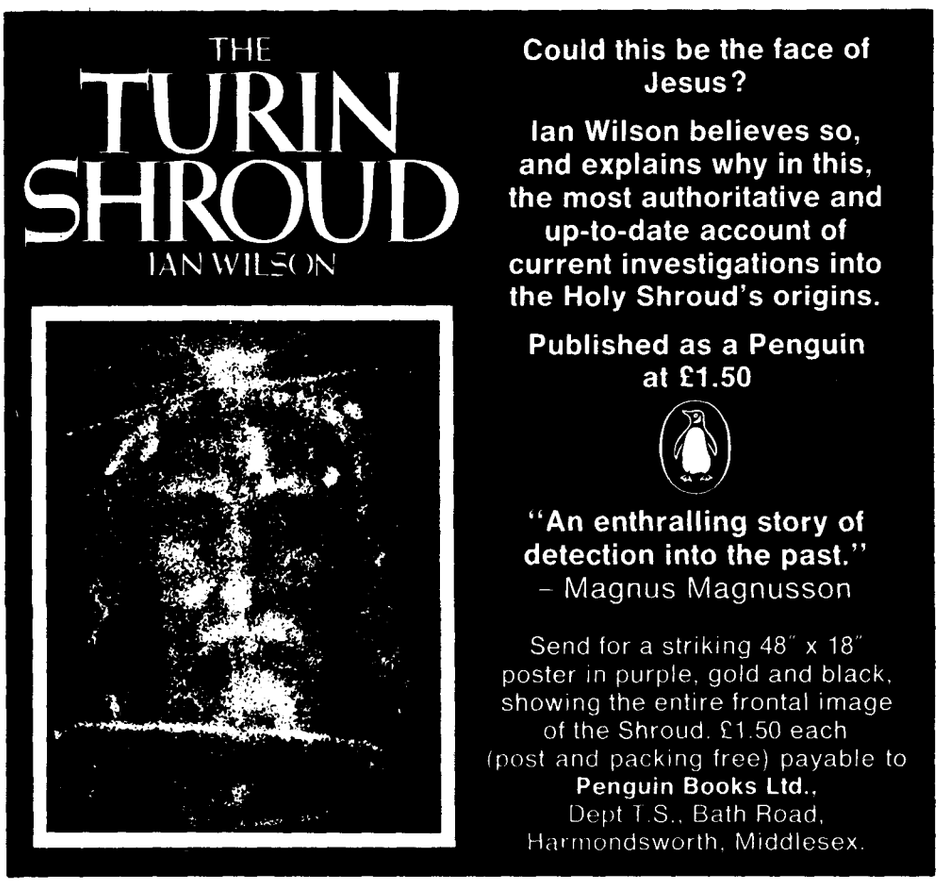
The mathematicians, vaguely annoyed till now at having their refreshment time broken into, are now faintly amused. Hunter takes from his pocket a piece of paper and begins to make rapid folds and incisions. Very tight shot of his fingers working at incredible speed.

Hunter: Bear with me . . . it will take less than a minute . . . now . . . there.

What he has now resembles a paper flower. He holds it up and slowly turns it inside out. It glows brightly for an instant and then, slowly, disappears. Pause. Silence. The mathematicians freeze into a tableau.

Hunter: (very softly) Behold, gentlemen the plane without a surface. *(Heavy silence.)*

Maisie: (VO) What are you reading?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All the mathematicians, Hunter included, drop their guise and become interrupted actors. They turn towards the door.

29: GGF's study

Dissolve to Maxwell and GGF who also look up suddenly and turn towards the door.

30: Albert's study

Dissolve to Albert who looks up from the diary and turns towards the door. Maisie leans there seductively. She has made herself beautiful — newly washed and combed hair, etc. She crosses the room and stands behind Albert's chair. She massages his neck.

Maisie: What are you reading that's so interesting?
Albert: Some pages in the diary I've never seen before.
Maisie: Didn't you hear me calling you?
Albert: No.
Maisie: I was in the bedroom.
Albert: Ah.
Maisie: (mouth close to Albert's ear) I was waiting for you. I called and called, and waited and waited. Now I've come to get you myself. I'm going to carry you off to bed . . . mmm . . . I'm going to have my way with you.
Albert: Oh.
Maisie: I want you, Al. Do you know how long it is since we made love?
Albert: Yes.
Maisie: Three weeks. Three whole weeks, Al. If you won't take me, then I shall take you. I love you. I *want* you. I'm sorry about this morning. I was being silly. Come with me now, we'll make it all right again.
Albert: (without turning round) You know how it is . . . with my work . . . I don't . . .
Maisie: Come on.
Albert: No.

Maisie straightens and takes her hands off Albert. Albert tenses, waiting. He cannot quite see her. Maisie picks up Capt. Nicholls from the table. She tilts the glass and contemplates the drifting contents. Albert waits. Pause.

Maisie: (shouting) You're so complacent!

She dashes the glass jar against the table.

Albert: No!

The penis lies across one of the diaries, surrounded by broken glass, formaldehyde.

Albert: (slight whine) Why did you do that? Why did you do that? That belonged to my greatgrandfather. Maisie, why?
Maisie: I'm going out for a walk.

She leaves. Albert contemplates the huge, grey, slug-like thing. He picks pieces of glass out of his lap.

31: A plot of earth

Albert buries a small paper parcel in a patch of earth. Sounds of close busy traffic.

32: Albert's study

Albert dabs with his handkerchief at the formaldehyde on the diaries. A large, jagged lower portion of the jar to remain on his desk. He contemplates the diary. It glows . . .

33: GGF's study

The pipe is alight again. Maxwell draws.

GGF: And then?

Dissolve through the smoke to the Conference Hall.

34: Conference Hall

Still the heavy silence. All the mathematicians stare at Hunter. Camera travels over their faces. In each one we see an almost imperceptible flickering and trembling, a tension of mounting fury expressed in total silence. Finally, one thin gasp escapes, and then another.

Mathematician: (close to apoplexy) How . . . dare you sir! How dare you insult the dignity of this assembly with a worthless conjuror's trick. *(Murmurs of assent.)* You should be ashamed, young man, thoroughly ashamed.

With the exception of the servants who stand stiffly to attention with the refreshments, and of Goodman, the young American, the whole room now erupts.

The mathematicians advance on Hunter shaking their fists, shouting insults and threats. An old man reaches Hunter, stands on tiptoe to shake his fist under Hunter's nose and drops to the floor clutching at his heart. Hunter remains perfectly still — a faint smile. When at last he raises his hand, the mathematicians fall silent immediately. Under all this rage, they long desperately for an explanation.

Hunter: Gentlemen, your concern is quite understandable. Therefore I will effect another proof, the ultimate proof for which I require the services of an assistant. *(Silence. Goodman steps forward.)*
Goodman: Stephen Goodman of the University of Harvard at your disposal, sir.
Hunter: Thank you. Now . . .

Hunter strides through the crowd to a low chaise-longue which lies against one wall. Goodman walks behind him, the rest follow more slowly.

Hunter: I want you to take these papers with you when you return to England . . .
Goodman: But I . . .

Hunter: Keep them with you until I come to collect them, or you hear of my whereabouts.
Goodman: But I am returning to the United States . . .

Hunter has turned to examine the couch and does not hear.

Hunter: Now I shall place myself face downwards here. When my legs are raised you will take my ankles in your left hand with your right . . .

The mathematicians gathering round the couch. Hunter giving his instructions to Goodman. Hunter removes his jacket and shoes and loosens his collar.

He lies on the couch and with Goodman's help puts his body through a series of contortions. These must seem improbable — use tight CU and other people's legs! Goodman begins to pass Hunter's legs through the hoop Hunter has made behind his back with his arms. As he does so, Hunter disappears bit by bit . . .

The mathematicians are stunned.

Hunter's voice: (resounds) Behold, gentlemen, the plane without a surface.

A mathematician peers under the couch. Another looks in the folds of Hunter's jacket. Uproar. Dissolve.

35: GGF's study

GGF: (standing, excited) And you have those papers, Maxwell!
Maxwell: (sleepily) I've had them for over a year now. I've written to the university at Edinburgh but the authorities there are not helpful. They say Hunter is on extended leave, and they will not divulge his address.
GGF: I insist you send for those papers immediately. I must see them.
Maxwell: It's late my friend. I will have them brought to you in the morning, I promise you. *(Yawning.)* But be warned, I've been through those papers myself a number of times and there is simply no sense to be had of them.
GGF: You underestimate me.
Maxwell: If there is anything there I am certain you are the man to find it. I've a strong suspicion though that Goodman was playing a practical joke on me. It could be his father put him up to it. Yes . . . paying off an old score, or . . . well . . . you simply cannot trust Americans.

Maxwell falls asleep. GGF paces the study.

Later, GGF sits at his desk writing in his journal. In background Maxwell sleeps.

Morning. GGF at his desk surrounded by pages of Hunter's thesis. He copies symbols into the pages of the diary. Holding those symbols we dissolve to Albert's study.

36: Albert's study

He slowly turns the pages of the diary. Each page is crammed with mathematical calculations. At the bottom of one page he reads the words 'Dimensionality is a function of consciousness'. He turns more pages. Then he reads 'It disappeared in my hands!' On the next page a set of paper-folding drawings, each one numbered in succession. On another page is a set of numbered yoga positions. Albert stands suddenly, his chair tips over behind him. Cut to Albert rummaging through a drawer for a compass and a steel ruler. Cut to Albert sharpening a pencil to a very fine point. Albert has cleared a large space on his desk. He has arranged the steel ruler, compass and a Stanley knife neatly to one side of a clean sheet of paper. He consults the Diary, makes a measurement and trims the paper. Albert stands on the far side of his study contemplating the 'Paper flower' on his desk. It is surrounded by shreds of paper.

Albert at his desk. Holding the flower, he consults the diary. He uses his thumbs to push the flower inside out. Nothing happens. Albert gasps, screws the 'flower' up and hurls it at the floor. We see then ten similar screwed up paper flowers.

37: Hall

Maisie, dressed in overcoat and thick scarf, pushes open the door. She sees Albert staring at his empty hands. Maisie takes a couple of steps into the room.

38: Study

Albert is too absorbed and does not look up.

Maisie: What *are* you doing?

Albert starts. He picks up the broken piece of jar. He stares at Maisie with growing resentment.

Albert: Why did you do it?
Maisie: Albert! You haven't been sitting there all afternoon thinking about that. *(Stands by Albert's desk.)* What happened to it anyway? Did you eat it?
Albert: I buried it in the garden.
Maisie: (kneeling by Albert's chair) Listen, love, I really do feel bad about what happened and I'm sorry. I just sort of did it before I knew what was happening. One second it was in my hands, and the next . . . I know it was important to you and I am really sorry, really I am. Will you forgive me?
Albert: (hesitates, then smiles) Yes, of course I forgive you Maisie.
Maisie: Al!
Albert: I mean, it was only a prick in a pickle wasn't it?

They laugh and kiss.

Maisie: I love you Al.
Albert: Mmmm.
Maisie: I just know those diaries are going to be a great success when they're published.
Albert: Never know your luck.
Maisie: And then we'll be able to go on holiday.
Albert: Somewhere cold, clean and treeless.
Maisie: Or a hot, dirty jungle.
Albert: Separate holidays perhaps.

They laugh and kiss again.

Maisie: Tell you what. I'll make a delicious dinner. Are you hungry?
Albert: Yes. That would be lovely.
Maisie: And I'll get some wine.
Albert: Good.

She kisses him on the top of the head and leaves. As soon as she has gone Albert returns to the diary.

39: GGF's study. Evening

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We find a few empty wine bottles. GGF and Maxwell drunk. They are laughing helplessly. GGF is dividing his attention between helping Maxwell undress and clearing a settee of books and papers.

Maxwell: You've advanced . . . you've advanced . . . this is one step forward from measuring the compressibility of horse dung.
GGF: It's a thousand steps forward. Now, off with these . . . and this.
Maxwell: Doesn't it require some faith on my part?
GGF: No, only on mine. *(They collapse towards the settee laughing.)* Now, to work, to work.

40: Albert and Maisie's kitchen

Albert and Maisie are seated at a small table in a corner. They have finished eating. One bottle of wine stands empty and they are starting on another. Albert has just finished rolling a joint. He lights up, inhales and passes it to Maisie.

Maisie: There was a time when we did this every night.
Albert: And we were never out of bed before midday.
Maisie: Remember that weekend when we smoked a whole ounce of grass.
Albert: A different world.
Maisie: But we're not so different, I mean, underneath it all.
Albert: Certain things never change.
Maisie: (fondly) Here's to us then.
Albert: (fondly) No, here's to *you.*
Maisie: All right, to me.

She reaches across the table and strokes the side of his face. Albert smiles and kisses her hand.

Albert: You know, my greatgrandfather once worked out by mathematics that there were only 17 positions for making love in.
Maisie: We've proved him wrong in our time haven't we?
Albert: Certainly have.
Maisie: And we still can.
Albert: We just need to get on top of our differences.

They laugh.

Half an hour later. The second bottle of wine is finished. So is the joint.

Maisie: Next summer I'm going to work in Scotland for the Forestry Commission.
Albert: You said that last year . . .
Maisie: Yeah, but this year I'm really going to do it. Think of it, Al! Out working all day among trees, surrounded by mountains, getting into the land. Getting physically strong and suntanned. Listen, Al. Why don't we both go?
Albert: I've never thought about it.
Maisie: It would be amazing, the two of us. You will have finished the diaries by then. The big outdoors Al. Just think of us there, together.
Albert: It might do our marriage some good.
Maisie: It's bound to . . . all that space, those huge skies. We're so cramped here. We need to do something together, we need an adventure.
Albert: I'm convinced, you've sold it to me. Let's go up there together.

Albert and Maisie embrace.

Maisie: Oh Al, I'm so drunk, so stoned, so happy!

41: Bedroom

What takes place now between Albert and Maisie must look as much as possible like a scene of lovemaking. Maisie lies face downwards, Albert lies beside her, caressing her back. Maisie's words are blurred and luxurious. She is very relaxed, just as he intended. Only imperceptibly does he begin to arrange her limbs into the position he wants. Maisie submits easily, wishing to abandon herself completely to the situation . . . until it is too late.

Maisie: I was walking along the river this afternoon. The trees are beautiful now, the oaks, the elms . . . mmm . . . there are two copper beeches about a mile past the footbridge, you should see them now . . . ahh, that's nice . . .

Albert kisses the nape of her neck and slowly brings her arms behind her back.

There are blackberries, the biggest ones I've ever seen, growing all along the path, and elderberries too. I'm going to make some wine with them next year.

Albert positions Maisie's arms. His hands travel down her legs.

And the river is really still. You know, reflecting the trees, and the leaves are dropping into the river. I found this little secret place, we should go there before the winter comes. It's a bed of leaves, and no one would ever find it.

Albert slowly works Maisie's legs upwards to form a hoop with hands.

I sat in this place for half an hour without moving. I was like a tree. I saw a water rat running along the opposite bank, and different kinds of ducks landing on the river and taking off. Ah! position number 18.

They laugh. Albert kisses Maisie and at the same time lifts her head backwards towards the hoop made by her legs and arms.

I saw these two beautiful orange butterflies. They almost landed on my hand. Then . . . careful. *(shouting)* Careful! Al! That hurts!

Albert begins to turn Maisie inside out. All the while he continues to kiss her. Maisie's groans suggest the abandon of lovemaking, as well as fear and pain.

Maisie: What's happening to me? *(sighs)* Oh God, what's happening?

Maisie begins to disappear.

Maisie's voice: (very remote) Al, where am I? . . . Al?

Cut to Albert sitting on the edge of the bed. A faint grin which does not part his lips.

42: GGF's study

GGF swaying slightly before the empty settee.

GGF: Maxwell? Where are you, Maxwell? . . . Maxwell?

Peter Conrad

Syntax and Sin

The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1, An Introduction by MICHEL FOUCAULT *Allen Lane* £5.95

Having safely institutionalised madness, Michel Foucault now offers to do the same for sex. Structuralism has vowed itself, apparently, to the extermination of our vital energies, and it proceeds about its grim work by codifying life and formalising nature into the verbal artifice Foucault calls a 'discourse'. In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault contended that insanity was an invention of the asylums built to contain it. In the Middle Ages, the lunatic was not only a member of society but a covert social norm: as all men were embarked on the Erasmian ship of fools, those with no pretence at rationality might after all be the wisest philosophers. Hence the sainted folly of Don Quixote, or of Shakespeare's addlepated clowns. But once society declares itself reasonable, Foucault argues, it necessarily excludes the cranky and the misbegotten. It first defines madness, then confines it.

Foucault's theory is less history than a fable, which serves him as an oblique justification of structuralism. Asylums are an apt image for the structuralist, whose methodology is punitive: he can understand something only by locking it up, formulating a structure in which to restrain it. In *The History of Sexuality*, the institution which corresponds to the asylums of Foucault's earlier book is the Salpêtrière of the physician Charcot, a unit for the observation and vindictive arousal of sexual symptoms. Just as the asylums define madness by incarcerating it, so (for Foucault) Charcot's ether-fuelled engines don't so much analyse as invent sexual impulse. He quotes the record of a consultation in 1887. Charcot arrests the hysteria of a patient by 'placing first his hand, then the end of a baton, on the woman's ovaries'. He withdraws the obstetric aid, goads the suffering wretch with inhalations of amyl nitrate, and enjoys the satisfaction of hearing her cry out 'for the sex-baton in words . . . devoid of any metaphor'.

The sleazy, gruesome episode is a parable. Charcot's brutal, bludgeoning mode of arousal equals Foucault's oppressive mode of analysis. Each is an inflexible, unforgiving 'apparatus for producing truth'. Not for detecting truth but – such is the structuralist's sublime conceit – for producing, fabricating it. Rather than curing the afflicted, Charcot intensifies their dementia in order to study it. The truth he 'produces' by the application of phallic truncheons and phials of stimulant vapours is the woman's shrieking delirium. The cries of desperation she emits are sanitarily entitled her 'discourse' by Foucault. He, like Charcot, is in the business of provoking

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George Allen & Unwin

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discourse, and he too is convinced that the technology he deploys – a cumbrous armoury of linguistic prescription, numbering among its artillery such indispensable edicts as the 'rule of the tactical polyvalence of discourses' – doesn't merely anatomise sexual feeling but may actually be credited with inciting it by rendering it articulate.

Sustained by the power with which he believes his structuralist method invests him, Foucault sets about disassembling the 'repressive hypothesis' of Freudian sexology. In particular he refuses to be counted among Steven Marcus's 'other Victorians'. Marcus has explained Victorian pornography as the idyllic unleashing of a sexuality suppressed by industrialism (which deplored the dissipation of seminal energies and enchained the body to a regime of work) and by the genteel hypocrisy of bourgeois society. Like the state in the marxist millenium, pornography will wither away when repression is vanquished. Marcus acclaims Freud as the first of the liberators, who made it possible to 'discuss sexuality in a neutral way' and equipped men with 'a set of analytic instruments' which enabled them to 'achieve sufficient distance from their own sexual beliefs and behaviour . . . or to be able to begin to understand them'. In the liberal intellectual order of Marcus, knowledge is freedom. Where murky, taboo-ridden Id was, Freud establishes lucid, merciful Ego. The march of mind concludes by rescuing the body from enslavement to its own abysmal urges.

As Foucault sees it, however, knowledge merely confirms our lack of freedom. In struggling to be articulate about sex, we aren't even acceding to a wholesome frankness, but are training and disciplining our sexuality, carefully subjecting it to a legalistic system of power structures. Messy, amorphous sex is triumphantly endowed with institutional structure by four processes which Foucault calls 'a hysterisation of women's bodies', 'a pedagogisation of children's sex', 'a socialisation of procreative behaviour', and 'a psychiatrisation of perverse pleasure'. To the structuralist, the structure itself is above reproach, no matter how malign it may be. For Foucault therefore there can be no question of an exit from repression. We don't need it, he says, because we have been discussing sex obsessively for centuries, and we can't have it, because our discourses aren't (as Freud and Marcus promised) therapeutic: instead there are sly strategies for harnessing sex to an 'order of power' and thereby legitimising it.

Foucault's argument sinisterly assumes that sex is a matter less of action than of linguistic self-solicitation. We generate physical aptitudes not by day-dreaming, as in Marcus's healingly irrational 'pornotopia', but by talking – by what Foucault grandiosely calls a 'generalised discursive erethrism'. Here we have a new and nasty version of orality: not sex in the head, which used to be the intellectual's ailment, but sex *sur la langue*. Why should the hierarchs of French structuralism be so besotted with sex? Roland Barthes has even turned reading into an ersatz orgasm, reducing critical judgments to calibrations on a peter-meter and enjoining us (as if we were learning the gradations of petting) to recognise the difference between texts which teasingly afford us only pleasure and those which go all the way and deliver bliss. The aesthetics of Barthes are at least hedonistic. He wants to make criticism a sub-species of *dégustation*. Foucault's ambition is less festive.

He complains that our society has no *ars erotica*, no tabulation of the esoteric ingenuities of sex. Instead we have accumulated a *scientia sexualis*, an etiquette of confession geared to the forced extortion of secrets, first in curtained church cubicles, latterly on the psychiatrist's couch. Here Foucault is right. Nowadays, instead of whispering our lapses to prurient ecclesiastics and petitioning for absolution, we confide our requirements to those agonised ads for sexual partners which swell the back half of the *New York Review of Books*. Though the moral sanctions have been removed, the self-exposure required is still penitential. Hence the furtive anonymity of the procedure. The modern equivalent of the confessional is the private correspondence box for receiving replies to one's entreaty, or perhaps the computer which uses its binary junctions to match blind dates, carrying inside itself in code the secret lives of its clients. Foucault himself is not only the historian of the *scientia sexualis* but also a practitioner. His structuralist pseudo-science is an agent of the induced confession, the extorted discourse. He demands that everything be articulated, and provides a glossary of clinical neologisms for the purpose. His concern is not the classification of error and the assignment of punishments, like the medieval father-confessor: it is, even more mortifyingly, the reduction of sex to a vocabulary, sin to syntax. Like the Salpêtrière, Foucault's method inflicts a psychological torture by denying us our right to remain silent. We will have no sexuality, he threatens, unless we talk about it. Foucault's dictatorial longing, concealed in these pages, is to wield Charcot's baton or – less belligerently but even more efficaciously – that silver ring which in Diderot's *Les Bijoux indiscrets* compels all genital organs to chatter incontinently.

Foucault thinks that sex, like madness, was invented in the 18th century, when it was first submitted to the rule of law. As well as preposterously disenfranchising all those carnal creatures who thronged through the world before then, this reveals Foucault's own provinciality. He associates sex with the 18th century because the French literature of that period undertakes, as he has done, to systematise it. Diderot does so by conjuring up an implement – the sultan's ring – which startles those hermetic organs into loquacity. Laclos does so by making the libertine an inductive adventurer, seeking to know his victims rather than to enjoy them. De Sade does so by a painstaking extrapolation of sexual positions and a mathematical permutation of appetite into perversion. Foucault does so by turning sex not into cynical epigrams, as La Rochefoucauld did, but into self-purging discourse. The enterprise is less universal in its relevance than Foucault imagines. Recoiling from rude nature, the French want to make sex, like eating, an art – which means making it a frigidly rigorous science.

Historical objections to Foucault's theory of a society logorrheally discoursing about sex won't disconcert him. The structuralist discounts such tediously 'synchronic' quibbles, as he would call them, to which his own 'diachronic' scheme is loftily impervious. Foucault has locked himself up inside his own structure. In his linguistic prison, all sex becomes a solitary vice, an end-game played not with bodies but with words.

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Gavin Ewart

Sipsop Says

The Faber Book of Nonsense Verse edited by Geoffrey Grigson *Faber* £5.95

When in doubt, attack the blurb. This ancient precept, which has stood reviewers of verse in good stead for hundreds of years, emboldens me. To call Geoffrey Grigson 'that master-anthologist', as though he were an old master-baker or something, seriously downgrades a man who once edited one of the best poetry magazines of the century and himself has a few strings to his bow as a poet. But I suppose Faber know what they are doing. Certainly the blurbie was right. Grigson has indeed 'produced a sparkling, brilliantly entertaining collection' – though the terms that are used in blurbpraise always, unfortunately, make the statements seem utterly unbelievable.

Nonsense poetry and humorous poetry are very similar kinds of light verse. They are sometimes so close that they are only the thickness of a piece of paper apart; and the same poem can be both. Grigson's view, advanced in his introduction, is that 'nonsense poetry, at its best, at its least contaminated, leaves parody, leaves satire, leaves the literature against which it is set, for its own freedom'. In other words, reason is what 'contaminates' it; the purest nonsense is completely illogical ('So she went into the garden to cut a cabbage leaf, to make an apple pie'). This kind of verse is sophisticated – as are parody and satire – and Skelton (born 1460) is the earliest named practitioner, though some of the Anons, in the form of nonsense children's verse, might be as old. The purest nonsense here is by William Blake ('Sipsop's Song'):

> Hang your serious songs, said Sipsop & he sung as follows
>
> Fa ra so bo ro
> Fa ra bo ra
> So ba ra ra ba rare roro
> Sa ra ra ra bo ro ro ro
> Radara
> Sarapodo no flo ro.

Nonsense verse is in fact a very modern thing. The poets of Ancient Greece and Rome didn't write it, although their traditions were as well-developed as ours before the civilisations began to decline. There was a great flowering in 19th-century England – and Grigson includes no fewer than 36 pieces by Lewis Carroll and 51 by Lear. In his *New Oxford Book of Light Verse* Kingsley Amis says that light verse can never be beautiful. This is a very doubtful statement in view of some of Lear's nonsense lyrics (not the limericks). 'Beautiful' is a tricky word, but I think it could be applied to 'The Owl and The Pussy Cat', 'The Jumblies', 'The Dong with a Luminous Nose', where Lear exercises his Tennysonian melancholy. Walter de la Mare, Housman and Stevie Smith are also very well represented (12, 8, 11 respectively). Another flowering (and Grigson's notes and dates and explanations add tremendously to the interest of his collection) was in Russia in the 1850s when Alexei Konstantinovich Tolstoy and his two cousins satirised the conceit and lack of humour of civil servants under the Czar's autocracy by inventing a ridiculous bureaucrat and publishing his Collected Works. Grigson, although he includes work by Hans Arp (both in the original French and in translation) and Robert Desnos (French only) and Christian Morgenstern (all translated except for the fine Latin of 'Lunovis' and one in an invented language), doesn't really shake my idea of nonsense as being a very English thing. There are a few Scots poems which are genuine nonsense ('Aiken Drum', 'Fower-an-twenty Heilandmen' for example) but Wales and Ireland haven't produced any well-known ones at all.

Another interesting category is the one that includes the fractured French of George du Maurier:

> *Il existe une Espinstère à Tours,*
> *Un peu vite, et qui porte toujours*
> *Un ulsteur peau-de-phoque,*
> *Un chapeau bilicoque,*
> *Et des nicrebocqueurs en velours.*

This is charming. Less charming, because of the heavy dependence on pronunciation, are the works which are included in L. D'A. Van Rooten's book *Mots d'Heures: Gousses, Rames* (Mother Goose's Rhymes). An example:

> *Reine, reine, gueux éveille.*
> *Gomme à gaine, en horreur, taie.*

This is both 'Rain, rain, go away./Come again another day' and, translated literally, 'Queen, Queen, arouse the rabble/Who use their girdles, horrors, as pillow slips!'

It is particularly interesting that what originally made sense can become nonsense when the correct meaning of the words is forgotten. 'Pop Goes The Weasel' is the best example of this – 'popping' was pawning, a weasel was a hat-maker's block, the 'Eagle' was a pub. Nursery rhymes that are historical go through the same process (Georgie-Porgy was George IV, Jack Horner abstracted the deeds of a manor from a portfolio of documents) and lose their original significance so that they too seem nonsensical.

As with all anthologies, the boundaries have to be set. A good deal of Stevie Smith, extremely satisfying though it is, is fantastic without being strictly nonsense. Her poem 'Tenuous and Precarious' makes the same play with Roman names that *Up Pompeii* did, nor is such humour rare. The poems of Hans Arp have a lot in common with French surrealist poetry (lines like *l'éléphant est amoureux du millimètre*), although they are far more playful and ingenious:

> *le papillon empaillé*
> *devient un papapillon empapaillé*
> *le papapillon empapaillé*
> *devient un grandpapapillon grandempapaillé*

A step forwards – or sideways – from Mozart's Papageno and Papagena music. Yet Grigson has laid his interdict on all official surrealist verse ('the rather boring, institutionalised, démodé and now academically studied nonsense of surrealism, which conformed too much to a conscious theory, to a programme'), and, although I can think of one poem each by Philip O'Connor and Hugh Sykes Davies that are entertaining too, I think he was right to ban *serious* nonsense. There's quite enough of that around.

Hilary Spurling

Bloody Mama

My Mother My Self: The Daughter's Search for Identity by NANCY FRIDAY *Sheldon Press* £7.50 and *Fontana* £1.50

Jocasta's Revenge might have been a catchier title for this shrewd attempt to do for the female unconscious what the Oedipus complex did for men's. Nancy Friday has spent four years questioning more than 200 American women ('Most were mothers. All were daughters' – not forgetting 21 who had professional qualifications), and embodying their answers in *My Mother My Self*, a practical handbook with case histories – by Spock, as it were, out of Kinsey – which has already sold two million copies in the US.

It covers the ground from menstruation to menopause, stopping on the way to examine the discouraging facts behind virtually every brutal stereotype, from the seaside postcard tart and the cruel stepmother of folklore to the naggers and No-sayers and homicidal mothers-in-law of immemorial farce. Bitchiness is methodically explored, starting with the primal guilty party ('Who first takes our hand away from our genitals...? Who pushed away the tiny hand long before we became oedipally interested in daddy?'), moving on to all the other routine humiliations

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and deceptions inflicted by mother on daughter, taking in a boundless field of what might have seemed less obvious forms of aggro like chastity, obedience and self-abnegation.

It would be absurd to deny the force and charm of Ms Friday's Keep Fit Class manner ('Toilet training focuses our whole relationship with mother on to the vastly important area between our legs'); or for that matter the universal appeal of a book based on the same principle as the 'Modess Because' ads whose sales technique she greatly admires – except that, where the copywriters play on their clients' suppressed anxieties with fast cars and Givenchy frocks, Ms Friday trades openly in guilt, fear, anger, shame and self-loathing with herself as her principal exhibit. Anything your mother did, mine could do worse, is her refrain; and there is something invigorating, if not exactly consoling, about this highly competitive account of how the young Nancy lied to her mother, stole from the grown-ups, betrayed her school friends and poured ink on her sister's party frock, before heading out into deeper waters and coming discreetly to rest at last in the unexpectedly conventional harbour of a perfect marriage.

But consolation is scarcely the point of this post-Spock manual. What it lacks in reassurance it makes up in excitement. Much of it reads like a personal exam paper, comprehensive in scope and accusatory in tone. Does your daughter suffer from shyness, hypochondria, spots, inhibitions or the lack of them? Before she was born, did you hope for a girl? Does your mother phone you daily? Do you wish you had bigger breasts/smaller hips/a smarter husband? Do you call him Daddy? *Do you, or have you ever, blamed your mother for anything?* Anyone answering Yes to any but the last of these questions goes to the bottom of the class. The exciting thing is that – in sharp contrast to the emollient Spock, in whose book mother can hardly put a foot wrong – here she can't put a foot right.

Repression is her fatal function: whatever she does, her daughter will hold it against her; indeed the harder she tries to feel free, the more implacable that ancestral grudge. Ms Friday is especially good at expounding what you might call the Catch-22 of the Jocasta complex, which turns on the hair-raising consequences of preaching what your mother didn't practise. Unconditional sexual freedom may be this book's panacea but its author freely acknowledges that not every reader will be up to teaching her daughter to masturbate like Dr Leah Schaefer, or encouraging her to enjoy the parental vagina like Dr Mio Fredland (who goes too far even for the intrepid Ms Friday: 'The idea of my lying on my mother's bathroom rug, smiling up at her vagina, is too awful to imagine . . .'). All but a handful of these case histories remain firmly in the clutches of that grim Victorian scold Mrs Be Done By As You Did, whose repeated triumphs over the wishy-washy liberalism of Mrs Do As You Would Be Done By constitute one of the book's prime lessons.

But perhaps its chief interest lies not in its practical insights (which, however sound, are expressed without subtlety or originality), still less in its crusading zeal, rather in its wholly unself-conscious and deeply unflattering reflection of the contemporary nuclear family. On page after page wives and daughters are described – or describe themselves – as banding together to get their own back on Dad, milking his money, denying him sexual favours, generally cutting him down to size. Whatever their unconscious motives, the conscious assumptions these mothers pass on to their daughters are still the traditional ones – that men are there to be lied to, boasted about, competed for, flattered and tricked into marriage, manipulated thereafter via a judicious combination of sex and money; and the educational process is conducted with a frankness and energy which puts one in mind of nothing so much as the shrews and sourpusses, gossips and backbiters, dupes and cuckolds of Restoration comedy.

Otway's Sir Davy Dunce, Vanbrugh's Sir John Brute, Congreve's Sir Paul Plyant might each meet his match again and again among these breadwinners of affluent Middle America. Admittedly the conventions of both the 17th-century stage and the 20th-century psychological interview tend to emphasise greed, lust, rage, jealousy, at the expense of anything else life may hold. Nevertheless the parallel is so close that it makes one a trifle dubious about Ms Friday's wholehearted endorsement, on behalf of her sex, of what she herself calls the sexual adventuress: this was after all another type familiar enough in Restoration comedy and one which coped no better with the infantile urges than the repressed and embittered furies who infest both worlds and for whom *My Mother My Self* holds out no hope.

Kingsley Amis

Farewell Blues

Bongo, sitar, 'cello, flute, electric piano, bass guitar,
Training Orchestra, Research Team, Workshop, Group, Conservatoire,
Square Root, *Nexus*, *Barbaresque*, *Distortions*, *Voltage* – bloody row,
For Louis Armstrong, Mildred Bailey, Walter Page and Sidney Catlett lie in
Brunswick churchyard now.

Trumpets gelded, drums contingent, saxophones that bleat or bawl,
Keyless, barless, poor-man's Boulez, improvising on fuck-all,
Far beyond what feeling, reason, even mother wit allow,
While Muggsy Spanier, Floyd O'Brien, Sterling Bose and Henry Allen lie in
Decca churchyard now.

Dead's the note we loved that swelled within us, made us gasp and stare,
Simple joy and simple sadness thrashing the astounded air;
What replaced them no one asked for, but it turned up anyhow,
And Coleman Hawkins, Johnny Hodges, Bessie Smith and Pee Wee Russell lie in
Okeh churchyard now.

Blake Morrison

Hot Stuff

Close to Home by DEBORAH MOGGACH *Collins* £5.50
Slowly, Slowly in the Wind by PATRICIA HIGHSMITH *Heinemann* £4.50
The Long Goodbye by YURY TRIFONOV *Harper & Row* £6.95

If contemporary writing is anything to go by, what the English will choose to remember about the 1970s is not the winter of 1974 (all gloom and doom) but the summer of 1976. Remember – the unbroken sunshine, the water rationings, the ladybird plague? That summer, with its metaphors of drought or idyll, has already made an appearance in recent poetry and fiction. It turns up again in Deborah Moggach's second novel, *Close to Home*, where the long hot days drive normally confined feelings out into the open. The summer may not be 'the main character' of the novel (these days just about anything in a novel – except of course the humans – tends to get stuck with that coy label), but it is certainly a shaping presence. For a time it puts two adjoining families on uncomfortably close terms.

At 21 Brinsley St live the Greens: Sam, who has recently given up his office job in order to write a novel; his efficient psychiatrist wife Jetta; and their daughter Marion, an awkward adolescent whose chief pleasure is to visit a deaf pensioner as part of a Task Force project. At 23 Brinsley St live the Coopers: James, off for much of the time on EEC business, and Kate, whose hours are spent looking after two young children. As the summer warms up, and the families take to their back lawns, the barriers between them come down: Marion has the hots for James; James is not indifferent to Jetta, nor Jetta to James; and most ardent of all is Sam, whose novel gets stuck at page 50 as he dreams of seducing Kate. His opportunity comes when, with James and Jetta away on separate trips, he entices her over to his garden. We've already seen one consummation in the outhouse (Marion – amidst the laundry – losing her virginity to some spotty youth), and it's there that matters are brought to a head once again. Only after a hectic final scene involving a dramatic baby-snatch is equilibrium restored.

Close to Home is a funny, affectionate and unpretentious novel, clichéd in places (her tramps – guess what? – 'shuffle'), but always a pleasure to read. Its cosy surface is deceptive: Ms Moggach has acute things to say about young married life, about looking after children, about the secret places behind noisy North London streets. And though in danger of falling between two stools – its domestic routines deterring male readers, its lack of

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explicit protest deterring feminist ones – it deserves better than to do so: as its title suggests, *Close to Home* is very near the mark.

Critics have been unsure of where to place Patricia Highsmith's work, and it's easy to see why. To call her a 'crime writer' sounds limiting, even patronising, since, like Chabrol, Highsmith is less interested in the mechanics of crimes than in the psychology behind them. On the other hand you can hardly overlook the fact that most of her fictions end up with blood on their hands: she may command a high-art following, but there are those who read her to see how ingeniously and brutally she'll dispose of her characters. Very few of the 12 stories in *Slowly, Slowly in the Wind* slot neatly into a crime-suspense category, but there's no slackening of invention when it comes to the crunch. Vines sprouting out of a pond drag their victims underwater; a farmer's corpse is hung up as a scarecrow; Madame Thibault's Waxworks Museum acquires three additional exhibits . . .

The most chilling stories here are those in which the threat of violence or death, and the taking of measures to stave off that threat, have become a part of daily routine. 'The Network' describes, with frightening plausibility, 'a group of friends in New York who mutually bolstered one another's morale by telephoning, by giving constant assurance of friendship and solidarity against the sea of enemies, the nonfriends, the potential thieves, rapists and diddlers'. Resistance is strictly passive: any outright retaliation against an assailant ends in disaster. In 'Something You Have To Live With' Ginnie Brixton succeeds in murdering the man burgling her house, but her life is 'half-ruined' thereafter. In 'Broken Glass' old Andrew Coperman injures a mugger, but is murdered by him a few days later. There's a good deal of class and racial tension in these stories (middle-class whites protecting themselves against down-and-outs and blacks), but the ultimate horror-show is one that a family inflicts on itself: a child dies after swallowing broken glass and sleeping tablets left on the floor by a neglectful mother and drunk father. This story, 'Those Awful Dawns', reads at times like an exaggerated case-study for trainee social workers, but Highsmith's grasp of current social problems is generally greater than she's given credit for, and she's at her most macabre when most mundane.

It's some time now since Zhdanov and Socialist Realism, but the belief persists in the West that the only good Russian novelist is a dead or dissident one. The work of Yury Trifonov, who is widely admired and a best-seller in his country, shows that contemporary Soviet fiction is richer and more varied than we've been led to suppose. True, Trifonov's early novels sound as if they might have been toeing a party line: *The Quenching of the Thirst* (1963) was about the construction of a canal in Turkmenia (riveting stuff). But the three novellas which he published between 1969 and 1971, now brought together in *The Long Goodbye*, involved him in controversy at the same time as bringing him success. His translators don't tell us, but it's not hard to guess what it was that seemed controversial. For one thing these novellas reveal corruption in the social order: a man gets hold of building materials and cheap labour with mysterious ease; another bypasses the queue to see a heart specialist; a third bribes an official in order to get his son into university. There's also an implicit attack on the Soviet intelligentsia. One of its 'typical' members, Gartvig, is criticised for his icily analytical cast of mind: 'Don't get close to such people. Even a woman is only a specimen in their eyes.' Gartvig has a habit of taking academic leave in order to slum it with peasants and sailors and roadworkers; but this seemingly noble idealism is dismissed as cheap showmanship and a waste of talent.

Trifonov's strength as a novelist is that, while aware of his great predecessors, he places his work very firmly in the contemporary social context. In 'Taking Stock', for example, there are echoes of Tolstoy's 'The Death of Ivan Ilych' as Gennady looks back on what his life adds up to; but the story's milieu is that of middle-class Moscow in the 1960s. 'The Long Goodbye' has a more bohemian setting, its protagonists being actors and writers, but here too there are hard realities: Rebrov's need for an employment certificate (without it he will lose his flat) is central to the plot. The best of the three novellas, 'The Exchange', explores a traditional moral question, that of 'compromise', by way of a current social one – the accommodation shortage in Moscow. Dmitriev and Lena can beat the system and obtain a larger flat by taking in his sick mother – a move which previous in-law tensions make difficult. Here Trifonov's literary antecedent is Chekhov: Lena's nouveau-riche family is set against Dmitriev's cultured one in much the same way as Lopakhin is contrasted with the Renavskayas in *The Cherry Orchard*. Trifonov's translators are Helen P. Burlingame and Ellendea Proffer, who live in America: that, I suppose, explains words like 'freshman', sentences like 'the poor guy, he went through a lot that winter', and the glut of gottens. Why it should also mean 'disinterested' for 'uninterested', 'due to' for 'owing to' and such like is less clear: they've gotten no excuse for that.

This English

'This English' has run for just over a year now, and the time has come to close it down. The column met with a variety of responses, some of them extreme. Many readers' objections seemed to me to rest on an unspoken equation along the lines of – good grammar = expensive education = upper-class; others felt that it was prissy to apply any check on the chariot of spoken usage. (I always noticed, though, how well-written these letters of protest were.) On the other hand, the 'This English' postbag was extremely healthy, usually outswelling that of its sister column, 'This England', in the front half. Perhaps the best thing about 'This English' was that there was nothing else like it. Nor was it (in my view) elitist in any damaging sense. The errors and insensitivities it highlighted tended towards pomposity and stiltedness rather than naturalness and colloquial ease. Most entries were an affront to the ear, not just to the textbook. Anyway, many thanks to our witty and tireless monitors. A final sample: two wild lunges from the *Guardian* Diarist, two classic near-homophones, a duff headline and a snap tautology. £3 tokens apiece, and goodbye.

☐ Since the closure of *The Times* [Lord Chalfont] has not been innundated with a platform from which to explain the demise of the Shah of Iran . . . **Peter Hillmore** *Guardian* (Anne Hendrie)

☐ Other members of the Royal Family are having troubles of their own at present and I thought it only churlish not to refrain from perhaps complicating the issue. **Peter Hillmore** *Guardian* (J. A. Hall)

☐ Although she appears soft and gentle I got the impression that underlying all this was a woman with a whim of iron who would refuse to compromise. *Sunday Telegraph* (Peter James)

☐ Corporate priorities, which place the value of shares and bonds above the right of breadwinners to offer their families a decent living free from the sceptre of unemployment and lay-offs, has been supported by both the Liberals and Conservatives. **Election Leaflet** (W. D. Kennedy)

☐ It's Back to Artic Essex **Headline** *Southend Evening Echo* (David Ealey)

☐ The manager of the RAC's Newcastle centre, Mr Carl Stewart, said: 'Conditions are incredible and have to be seen to be believed.' *Guardian* (Geoffrey Taunton)

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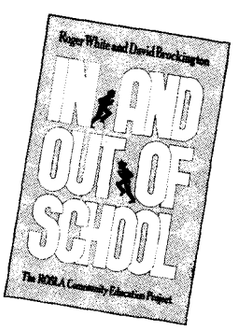

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Julian Barnes

The Two-Finger Guideline

You could tell that Roald Dahl was a writer from his armchair. Introducing the first of his *Tales of the Unexpected* (Anglia – and welcome to this column, even if your company colophon is the sort of tinsel figurine given away by Nicholas Parsons), Dahl sat in a high-backed, shiny-leather club chair, with a green-baize writing board across his knees; at his feet a fire blazed picturesquely away. This is, of course, how television companies imagine that writers write, regardless of the general fact that open fires tend to make the brain snooze, and the more particular fact that Dahl happens to write in a potting shed at the bottom of his garden. (It's a popular location: Masefield also wrote in a potting shed at the bottom of his garden, though much of the time he worked on ships-in-bottles, only scurrying to his desk if he heard his wife approaching.) Still, writers on television have to conform to the burnt-slippers stereotype, so Dahl was duly posed among the firedogs, looking like a domesticated Giscard d'Estaing, and was prevailed upon to warn us – in imitation of Hitchcock's intros – that 'You may be a little disturbed' by the story to come.

The creakiness of the format made his advice seem all the more superfluous. *The Man from the South,* the tale of a tropical wager with *Merchant of Venice* overtones – the stakes being a Jaguar to a little finger – was tense, frightening, annoyingly scarred by a commercial break, and, apart from this, quite unproductive of critical response. For, however ingenious, Dahl's tales are really very simple: a well-staged situation, a bit of atmosphere, leading to a killing – or, as here, a severely mutilating – twist. Character is bromidic: the high-class actors retained for the series merely have to stroll through and let the plot take the strain; which it does easily and pleasantly. The adaptation was laudably faithful: here a dated oath removed, there a Cadillac changed to a Jaguar (or 'Haguar' as Hose Ferrer hissed it). Why, though, in the concluding shot did the woman who in the story had wagered her left hand down to a thumb and one finger turn out on television to have a thumb and two fingers? Is this perhaps a precise measure of the civilising difference between what you can say in print and what you are allowed to show on the screen? If so, let's hope that the Two-Finger Guidelines are communicated as soon as possible to Ian McEwan and his fellow-sufferers.

However gruesome *Tales* become, they're unlikely to rival the nasty stuff dished up each week by *Life on Earth* (BBC-2). As David Attenborough gets higher up the evolutionary scale, the behaviour of his subjects becomes gradually more uncivilised. Bats, for instance, proved themselves – however much one tried to counterfeit the objectivity of the naturalist – to be unequivocally revolting. Dahl's series won't produce anything more unsavoury than the sight of a very low-rent number with black latex wings – a sort of bat Vincent Price – chomping its leg-cracking way through an outwitted giant cockroach; shortly afterwards a member of the same species was observed slurping down the top few inches of a banana. You couldn't help admitting that they are quite clever buggers: a clip of a bat swatting a mealworm in mid-flight – catching it with one wing, transferring it to its tail and then flipping it into its mouth – was impressively reminiscent of a bit of skilful ball-juggling by a Welsh fly-half; but their totalitarian appetite (they eat birds, fruit, blood, insects, fish, and aren't exactly picky about other bats), their deeply unfair sonar apparatus, and their testy little faces ensure that only blind hermits could ever possibly want them as pets.

Readers have for some time been urging me to watch something called *Antiques Roadshow* (Sundays, BBC-1). I did so this week by making two considerable sacrifices: first, of that seamless afternoon of sport which can usually be obtained with a little imaginative button-punching; and second, of my solemn vow never to watch a programme featuring that folksy sage Arthur Negus. *Roadshow*, to my surprise, turned out to contain rare human interest, a sustaining level of comedy, and – up to a point – useful information. The formula is that a team consisting of a frontman, Negus and a gang of Hooray Henrys from Sotheby's travel round the country crying 'Bring out your junk'. The locals respond by turning up at their town hall, aquiver with cupidity, their shopping-bags bulging with inherited rubbish, each hoping that his umbrella stand will turn out to be a 13th-century sumo-wrestler's finger-bowl.

This week the gig was at Buxton, with comic and touching results. 'These are always card tables,' pronounced Athur Negus, lowering his voice and lifting a rosewood flap; 'Oh dear – well, this one must be a tea table,' he went on, quickly adjusting his address when no baize hove into view. Someone brought along a German ticket-collector's punch and was authoritatively informed by the guns expert, 'It's something for cutting small nicks out of something.' But the best exchange came between the owner of a small bust of Napoleon and a Sotheby Henry: 'Have you been polishing it?' 'Yes.' 'Well, you shouldn't have been – it's valueless.' The loving owner had during years of diligent tenure removed every single trace of the original black stuff it had been coated with and had rendered it as shiny – and as worthless – as a new pin; but he came back with a warming plain-man truculence – 'I think it looks much nicer polished.' This good-humoured programme ends with everyone contented: the experts are happy with their injections of yokel gratitude and the total lack of challenge to their knowhow; the public are happy that their stuff has been, on the whole, declared worth more than they thought – or at any rate can now be labelled 'as seen on TV'; and the burglars are happy that the BBC has unearthed for them yet another profitable hunting ground. Late last Sunday afternoon, I hear, the northbound lanes of the M1 were clogged with large station wagons driven by men in striped jerseys.

I monitored *Read All About It* (BBC-1) with a sense of weary duty, anticipating from my *Radio Times* that Ronnie had been backsliding again: only one writer on the panel (the cogent Jane Gardam), plus a cartoonist and the principal lady dancer of the Royal Ballet. Risking it more than a bit, I thought, and so it proved. The cartoonist, Mark Boxer, whom for some reason I have always imagined to be middle-aged, turned out to be a svelte young masher, on to whose knee girls would be mad not to jump; and articulate with it. But the dancer announced her presence with 'I don't seem to have a lot of time to read – exept on holiday', and might as well have packed up her leotard there and then. Even Ronnie seemed to get a bit tetchy with her at one point. 'I don't remember that,' he interjected firmly. 'Can you remind me?' – whereupon she collapsed with a punctured, 'Oh Gosh.' Star of the show was the wry author of *Fungus the Bogeyman*, who declared, 'Yes, I wanted to do a book about the snot and all the other nasty things in everyday life.'

Nearly an NVLA moment this week during, of all things, *International Pro-Celebrity Golf* (BBC-2). I switched on right at the end to hear Peter Alliss quizzing Richie Benaud in front of the giveaway glassware: 'And, Richie, what a little knee-trembler on the last green!' I'd heard about football and tennis groupies, but green groupies? fairway floozies? bunker boffers? A hideous thought indeed. I was dialling Mary's number when Benaud's puzzled response indicated that Alliss had in fact been referring to the unnerving length of his putt. He, er, holed it, if I'm allowed to say that.

Films

John Coleman

Nutcrackers

Fantasia (U) *Odeon, Haymarket*
I Never Promised You a Rose Garden (X) *Classics, Haymarket, Victoria, Leicester Square*
Invasion of the Body Snatchers (X) *London Pavilion; Classic, Oxford Street; Scene*
Eraserhead (X) *Scala*
Nest of Vipers (X) *Ritz*

In a week calculated to make a chap throw in the sponge, to lose – at least – his sense of fun and concomitant balance, the revival of Walt Disney's *Fantasia* has proved a great, unexpected refresher. I couldn't be more pleasantly astounded. The conventional judgment of this animation of music is confounded in and by the event. The music, of course, suffers: everything, from Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor to a thoroughly sickening visual rendition of *Ave Maria*, is devalued, made a nonsense of. But only if you are deeply concerned about the music *per se*. I recall writing of Kubrick's *Clockwork Orange*

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that I would never be able to relish my favourite pop number, *Singing in the Rain*, again: the rape – you might say, and I did – buggered it. In the event, not true; and something of the sort holds for the monumentally vulgar *Fantasia*.

Dukas's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, for instance, almost gains from the quite extraordinary confrontation of Mickey Mouse and a hundred brooms and a huge, swamping wash of water: it is an achieved audacity, a collector's item, an entitled testimony of Disney (who was the mouse's voice) to himself. There are several other stunning things. The film – in a very good print, with stereophonic sound – shakes and blazes into a life as active as that of the music it scores off: you could say, it wins. The Beethoven *Pastoral is* as crummy, cute and lipsticked as memory had it; nothing harmful is done to Ponchielli's *Dance of the Hours*, with its balletic hippos, crocs, elephants and ostriches – hilarity is in order here; Mussorgsky's *Night on a Bald Mountain* is not much under amazing – skeletons swirl like mad sperm, the gigantic, yellow-eyed ogre who has summoned them from graves genuinely alarms; it is a hell of a wizard's sabbath of an event, incredibly choreographed. Nothing better ever came out of the Disney stables, even if Stokowski should have been thoroughly ashamed of himself. What is sad is that this strange, adventurous, here and there brilliant enterprise did badly at the box-office, sad because it contains some of the finest animation, some of the boldest notions around in a time not noted for its bravery. It is – and Disney was a conservative man, by all the accounts – a revolutionary work.

I Never Promised You a Rose Garden is the kind of title, leaning into the lachrymose and touched by the shade of Capote and his ilk, that rightly ought to warn one off; the manner of movie where America applauds itself for bravery about 'awkward' subjects, adds a smidgen of poetry and a dash of terrific acting (Gavin Lambert co-wrote and Bibi Andersson lends her inestimable presence), and generally does a con-job on one before one even turns up. It does have a few fine, pained and febrile lines which yank the attention; it is located in a nut-house for ladies (which is, presumably, Women's Lib's answer to the overrated *Cuckoo* affair); it tries to be tremendously humorously serious. I think it is probably a very bad film indeed, but it is astute enough to make me question my judgment, even my capacity for judgment. Another excellent actress, new to me, Kathleen Quinlan, is the central psychopath, Deborah; the year is 1956 (maybe if you shove it back chronologically, a cinematic trend if ever I saw one, it adds an amber of unknowing, cuts down on the brute business of having an opinion); she has a very chichi and cut-in flashback problem. It's these primitives on an island, see, with their own language and body-paint. No, I do not see. Except that I suspect whoever was culpably behind this event has seen an Italian film by the brothers Taviani, the name of which escapes me as fleetly as the significance of these high-jinks around lady loonies.

Sometimes, and especially this week, it is as if people with cameras and audiences at their disposal get a shade over-excited. The remake, by Philip Kaufman, of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* would be a case in point. Don Siegel directed the original, a cheapie and good heavens made in 1956 too (is this a message?) and directed it very well, simply, bluntly. SF matter floated down and took over a smallish American township. The local population became even duller, less feeling, than they probably were already. There could have been a message in this one, *viz*. McCarthy was fooling everyone most of the time and a bestseller called *The Lonely Crowd* lurked behind quite bright adults' worst fears, reinforcing them. Now it has become all flash and filigree, transplanted to San Francisco and shot as if the cameraman had just been given a new toy, edited as if the person at the movieola thought *he* was making the film, overall assembled as if an aleatory Altmanism is the current way of conveying something. I wouldn't rely on it. Donald Sutherland, with a curly hair-do he has gone on record as regretting, is sterling, looking as confused as his context. My gloomy opening was surely inspired by the worst experience I have had in a viewing theatre for a very long time: *Eraserhead*. The temptation is not to review it. All right, I succumb. Please don't go in your thousands. Don't go at all. Or don't you trust me? *Nest of Vipers* is a handsome Italian rubbish, love and torment in the Fascist days, greatly improved by the appearances of Senta Berger and the luscious Ornella Muti.

Sport

Russell Davies

Thirsty Work

We often hear that a footballer is 'unhappy', which we rightly take to be a shorthand expression covering a multitude of grudges, grievances and hurts, some of them amounting to no more than thwarted selfishness on the player's part or brute arrogance on his employers'. But every so often a talented footballer goes his own private way into misery, pursued by dark hints that he has 'a problem'. There are, for example, one or two quietly notorious gamblers in soccer at the moment, and one can only guess at the mess their affairs may finally be discovered in the day they pack up playing.

As for drinkers, they are harder to, as it were, fathom. It is generally assumed that players do 'take a drink'; they have the fitness to run it off. Some even have the working man's idea of a drinker's physique; and taking over a pub has long been one of the accepted ways in which a player can cash in on his local reputation. But it still comes as a surprise to members of our purist public when they spot a current player in a pub with a glass of something strong in his hand. There is a natural temptation to mutter 'aye, aye' and start a rumour – a process by no means discouraged by the more spectacular stories that leak out from behind closed doors at the end-of-season binges. If it is true, as I have heard more than once, that it is a certain player's habit at celebration dinners to unburden his twanging bladder over the table-cloth, then it is possible to believe almost anything of his 'fellow-professionals' in their infinite variety.

Jimmy Greaves, whose book *This One's On Me* (Arthur Barker £4.95) is published this week, does not remember the worst of what he did. He acknowledges that in the depths of his alcoholism he was a pig of a man, but as the low point of his life he identifies not some scarcely remembered porcine act, but a consciously pathetic tableau: himself on his knees by the dustbin, scrabbling among the bottles (thrown out by his despairing wife) for some surviving droplets of vodka. It is an image of degradation suffered, rather than suffering caused to others; but fair enough. The ineradicable mark of alcoholism, even after 'reform', is a relentless self-obsession, and in Greaves's case this has degenerated less markedly than usual into self-pity. His book is a frankly therapeutic confession, beginning with the formal statement that is the first step in the Alcoholics Anonymous programme of rehabilitation: 'My name is Jimmy G. I am a professional footballer and I am an alcoholic.'

It sounds dramatic, but in fact Greaves, much to his credit, takes an endogenous rather than a reactive view of his sickness; he points out, in other words, that certain things happened to him which may have accelerated his decline, but suggests that the makings of an addict were probably in him anyway from the start. This involves him in rather nobly playing down the effects on his morale (at the age of 19) of the death of his four-month-old son, from pneumonia; and in the professional sphere, he is similarly philosophical – or perhaps merely numb, after all the intervening disasters – over the bad bout of hepatitis that took him out of the game for 15 weeks, just a few crucial months before the 1966 World Cup tournament, thus adding medical doubts to the personal suspicion in which Greaves was already held by Alf Ramsey.

But the disappointment of failing to slot into Ramsey's machine-milled team came a good five years after the start of Greaves's long search for the bottom of the bottle. This had occurred as far back as '60/'61, when Greaves, eager to leave a Chelsea side for whom a temperamentally if not numerically typical result was a 6–5 defeat, signed on for A. C. Milan. It was a mistake he regretted even before his plane took off; worse, he was busy regretting it with Desmond Hackett in the airport restaurant over champagne and lobsters when the plane actually took off without him. This was the first symptom of a reckless despondency – his son had very recently died – which developed quickly, under the pressure of monastic Italian team discipline, into an appetite for alcoholic farce. English journalists frantically abetted Greaves in his campaigns to dodge the Milanese watchdogs and chaperones. Bizarre moonlit escapes were made; swimming pools were fallen into; heavy fines were imposed. Somewhat astonishingly, Greaves managed to score nine goals in his 14 games for Milan.

His time at Spurs was happy. It restabilised him and the drinking came back under control – yet the statistical section of the book shows a clear drop in goal-scoring exuberance. Greaves scored, in his time, three or more goals in no fewer than 22 first-division matches. Three times, for Chelsea, he scored five goals in a game. But after the '63/'64 season, there is just a small handful of hat-tricks, against lower league opposition in cup games: Greaves's personal decline was coinciding with, and being accentuated by, the new fashion for defensive play. By the time he joined West Ham in 1970 he could still summon the steam to score twice in his opening game against Manchester City – Greaves was

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famous for his habit of scoring in debut games at all levels – but the drinking school at West Ham had even hollower legs than the boys at the Bell and Hare in Tottenham. Their company, and the experience of being nearly killed several times daily in the 1970 World Cup Rally, seemed to have finished Greaves off.

He reappears today with a papery face and that unfortunate concession to football fashion, a silly perm. He is a sadder man, and wiser only for as long as he can stay sober. Like all alcoholics, he is something of a walking drama, though the drama is all on one note. I earnestly hope he is content to keep it there. (The AA's code, I must say, would make me reach for the corkscrew; seven out of the Twelve Articles insist on the hand of the Almighty in our affairs.) Chief among Greaves's treasures are his old scrapbooks, where the memory of his Saturday afternoon achievements is uncluttered by what happened the rest of the week. The prose is usually too emphatic to be enlightening but even the gaudy memory of Greaves as an 'impish goal-grabber' whose dribbling 'had a magical unreality' is worth preserving. As I remember him, the rarest of his talents was his knack of 'committing' the goal-keeper to a rash dive, following which Greaves, taking the ball wide, would roll it in calmly from any angle.

The proceeds from this publication go to paying off Jimmy Greaves's tax bill. It's not the worthiest of all causes, I admit; nor is the book a wonderful read. But Greaves was a wonderful player and he deserves, in the end, to retain as happy a memory of his prime as we do.

Theatre – 1

Benedict Nightingale

Cloak & Fangs

The Crucifer of Blood *Haymarket*
Bolshoi Puppet Theatre *Sadler's Wells*
Bread and Puppet Theatre *Riverside*

It almost seemed that the days when real horses were rescued from plausibly smashed trains, and credible troopships sank while the cast bravely saluted from the deck, were once again with us. A plump little steamer surged down the fog-bound stage of the Haymarket, starboard and port lights twinkling, and the audience applauded, as well it might. Forked lightning sizzled and flashed, to stupefying wallops on some thunder-machine offstage, as the pigmy with the poisoned darts in his blowpipe clambered in through the gothic windows to skewer the crippled villain's lymph-glands; and this time we all gasped, as our forefathers must have done at *The Whip*, *The Hope* or *The Sins of Society*. But there is one important difference between the aims and intentions of the spectacular melodramas of yesteryear and those of Paul Giovanni, whose contribution to the ever-expanding Holmes archives *The Crucifer of Blood* happens to be. He is, one feels, less interested in the frozen backbone and crawling scalp than in the slightly-curled lip, the upturned nose snuffling with late-20th-century condescension. His appeal is to those with a taste for the quaint and camp, to the kind of temperament that finds endless amusement in fin-de-siècle chamberpots and other period bric-à-brac.

The play's wild success in New York, combined with that of the *Dracula* we were unlucky enough to see over here last year, suggests that there is indeed an audience for spoof melodrama, at any rate in America. Precisely why is a question for the social anthropologist, or possibly for some space-age Gibbon, chronicling the ruin of Western civilisation from his floating laboratory above the radioactive clouds. All the poor critic can do is raise an eyebrow or two at the strangulated fake-Victorian rhetoric and the cumbersome fake-Victorian plot, at the lurid encounters in mutiny-threatened Agra and opium-polluted Limehouse, at the fatuous dénouement, and, incidentally, at the surprising incompetence displayed by Keith Michell's aquiline Sherlock, with his silky, wincing tenor. The character proves impressively nimble when he's called on to deduce from the mud on a lady's boots that she lives in reduced circumstances in Camberwell, but he seems remarkably helpless when it comes to halting the high death-rate that accompanies his self-satisfied perigrinations up and down the Thames Valley. Altogether, there must be more constructive ways of wasting an evening.

Perhaps it was the irony of a Russian company performing *The Good Soldier Schweik*, symbol of dogged resistance in Soviet-occupied Czechoslovakia. Perhaps it was the well-meaning incomprehensibility of the narration supplied by one of the People's Artists of the RSFSR, whatever that may be. Perhaps it was simply that I am ill-attuned to wooden and papier-mâché faces, having spent so long recording the ripples and squiggles of those directly created by DNA. But I have to admit to being left strangely cold by the Bolshoi Puppet Theatre of Leningrad, for all its skill with masks of every shape and marionettes of every size: an actor, shiny and slant-eyed with stylised lechery, dancing with a series of exotic ladies' dresses; burlesque psychiatrists, army bigwigs and Lady Bountifuls; and, swaggering and bouncing through it all, a tiny, grinning Schweik with cheeks like cherries. Or perhaps *because* of that skill, that emphasis on style, that empty bravura. Whatever the explanation, it was hard not to prefer Bread and Puppet's less ingenious and ambitious contribution to last week's Lilliputian invasion, the London Puppet Festival.

When the company visited the Royal Court ten years ago, we were all struck by those gaping eyes and mouths, those vast blunt fists and feet, those bowed, swaying bodies. Nothing in its new mime quite matches the scene in which eight-foot apostles took the eucharist beneath the gaze of a Byzantine Christ, himself later crucified on a shark-nosed airplane, emblem of atrocity in Vietnam; and the old objection to its work, a lack of intellectual clarity and cogency, must be repeated. But it is still visually arresting, and sometimes oddly moving. There's a bizarre Christmas nativity; a king, queen, devil, angel; a gaudy dragon, which is killed; a horse with a wooden leg, a cow with crutches, and several less cute images of dereliction and decay. The main characters, however, are what the programme describes as members of the International Union of Washerwomen: stolid figures with heavy, phlegmatic faces who are seen sewing, cleaning, crouching beneath a tarpaulin, or simply trudging across the stage with their tatty shopping bags. Their function is to incarnate something unpretentious, inarticulate, enduring and (supposedly) invincible: the spirit that the play ends by ascribing to one Grace Paley, lately arrested for demonstrating on the White House lawn against her nation's arms mountain. 'The grass of the whole world will be dangerous to all the children,' she is quoted as telling her deaf accusers. 'In fact, there won't be any grass and there won't be any children.' It could, perhaps should, all be very embarrassing: mawkish, patronising, and worse. Actually, it isn't.

Among this week's contributors:

IAN MCEWAN's first novel, *The Cement Garden*, was published last autumn by Cape. The story 'Solid Geometry' originally appeared in *First Love, Last Rites* (Cape, 1975).

Theatre – 2

Charles Fox

Black & Blue

Ain't Misbehavin' *Her Majesty's*

Not many songwriters establish reputations by singing other people's tunes. One who did – as far as the British public was concerned, anyway – was Fats Waller. A hero of *Housewives' Choice*, Waller warbled, chuckled and quipped his way through *My Very Good Friend The Milkman*, *Two Sleepy People*, *Your Feet's Too Big* and *I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter*, all the work of other hands, all – except, oddly, the first-named – to be encountered in *Ain't Misbehavin'*, carefully described on posters and programme as 'The New Fats Waller Musical Show'.

Lacking any story-line, using dancing to embellish what would otherwise be just a set of songs, it is in fact a commemoration of style. Not just Waller's buoyant mockery of 1930s pop-songs, but also what goes on being thought of as how Harlem used to be: incessantly high-spirited, full of girls with white furs and shiny lips, of men in derby hats, wearing coloured spats and waistcoats with watch-chains. Just as nobody really believes Paris to be inhabited by can-can dancers or London filled with coster-mongers doing knees-ups, so this notion of Harlem must be accepted as a theatrical image, invented perhaps to sell to whites from down town yet drawing on genuine vivacity. The five performers in this show (two were in the New York production) hurl themselves zestfully into re-creating that historical myth.

The wiggling of bottoms and bosoms may encourage the prissier-minded to invoke the name of Uncle Tom, to fret about the survival of old-style black stereotypes. They should have seen Fats Waller himself in action. At the Holborn Empire in 1939 he trucked from wings to piano, bushy eyebrows and scalp both twitching. Sitting himself daintily on the piano stool he peered at the droop behind

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before inquiring, 'Is you all on, Fats?' But a man who was billed in America as The Harmful Little Armful had a certain amount to live up to.

Nobody in *Ain't Misbehavin'* has that kind of impudent authority. There are no stars, simply a team of performers able to sing and dance and act more than capably. Most of Waller's own songs come in the first half, including a delicious *Squeeze Me*, sung – half-coyly, half-brazenly – by Jozella Reed, and Evan Bell trying a little too hard to put *Honeysuckle Rose* across as a ballad (Bell labours under the handicap of looking a bit like Waller and rousing expectations). The show-stoppers all turn up after the interval Most potent is Andre De Shield's slow-motion shimmying and high-as-a-kite singing in *The Viper's Drag*, starting with Waller's theme (originally a piano solo) but metamorphosing into *If You're A Viper*, full of expertise about reefers, a hit on Harlem juke-boxes in 1937 – but in a version by Rosetta Howard (Waller recorded the number too, only to have his record company destroy the master copy).

Charlaine Woodard, skittish as a June bug, concludes *Keepin' Out Of Mischief Now* with a melisma straight out of Billy Holiday; Annie Joe Edwards, looking – and sometimes sounding – as bountiful as Dinah Washington, comes up with an untypically subdued *Mean To Me*. Nevertheless, what the show is really short of is jazz: Waller's piano-playing, for a start; Luther Henderson copes but can only imitate, while the little band never gets within jitterbugging distance of Waller's own group. Still, purist bitching apart, the evening contrives to be hugely enjoyable. There is even a moment when the complexity of Fats Waller gets hinted at, a recognition that he may have been a captive of his own jocosity. The mood of the show changes as all five voices come together, one by one, out of tempo, transforming *Black And Blue* into what virtually amounts to a parable for Waller's life and times.

Weekend Competition

No 2559 **Set by Dan Drough**

Another updating: rewrite any famous love lyric in the style of Lennon and McCartney. Up to 14 lines and get your entries in by Wednesday 11 April.

Result of No 2556 **Set by Fatboy**

We asked you to dream up the most uncharacteristic utterances of celebrated people, along the lines of Kenneth Clark's 'Notice the way the eyes follow you round the room . . .'.

Report **by Arthur Ritus**

My, you're a wicked, cynical bunch, aren't you? Maybe all the years of crabby disappointment, of sending in entries which you were *quite sure* would be winners, only to see them airily disregarded by the Comp Judge of the day, is what's done it. And this grouchiness is even directed towards some of our own extremely talented NS writers. Tut, tut. Some of them we really couldn't print, like '*Roger Woddis*: God – this writer's block is killing me' (Terry Towling) or '*Arthur Marshall*: A charming actress with a pair of knockers that would choke a mule' (Jan Kelly) or '*Peter Conrad*: A 100 per cent all-action tip-top ripping yarn, warmly recommended to all readers between 6 and 96' (P.M.G. Shiel). A Wilson for each of those, and a pound for the ones below.

Gandhi: Come outside and say that.
Samuel Butler: Like father, like son.
Einstein: Absolutely. BOB SCOTT

David Attenborough: There seems to be no way in which this species can have evolved from any other.
Germaine Greer: I'm getting on nicely with your jumper, dear. JOHN STANLEY

Toulouse-Lautrec: I can see your bald patch.
Mother Theresa of Calcutta: Pull its wings off.
R. D. Laing: Pull yourself together.
Alan Ball: . . . nuance . . . I. BOULTON

Mr Micawber: Boy, are we in trouble!
Greta Garbo: Hey, everybody. My place at seven tonight.
St Francis of Assisi: The bloody mice are back.
The Pope: Two packets of three please.
KEITH GRAHAM

Clive James: Pluralism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.
Duke Hussey: Nice and easy does it.
Margaret Trudeau: No comment. JAN KELLY

Bryan Forbes: I've seen this film, and it's naïve and sentimental. BASIL RANSOME

Erin Pizzey: During my years as literary editor of the NEW STATESMAN . . .
Brian Clough: Frankly, I don't think I'm ready for the England job. TIM HOPKINS

Reginald Bosanquet: Several thousand Shia Muslims in the Southern city of Shiraz sang songs and shouted insults about the Shah.
DAVID SIMPSON

Oscar Wilde: Don't quote me . . .
T. S. Eliot: The Lady is, of course, the Virgin Mary, and the three white leopards symbolise the predatory instinct in man, and as for the juniper tree . . . BILL GREENWELL

Ken Russell: But you must admit the photography was awfully good. R. D. CONDON

Jacqueline Onassis: I'll take the cheapest one.
Mary Baker Eddy: It must be some bug that's going around. DAN FRANKLIN

Lord Kagan: Single to England, please.
ROBIN CHASE

Sigmund Freud: A joke's a joke.
Anaïs Nin: We were just good friends.
P. WILLIAMS

A. J. P. Taylor: Once upon a time there was a bad guy called Hitler. FRANK ANDERSON

Sir Alfred Ayer: When is a door not a door?
OLD ORATORIAN

Fiona Richmond: Only if it's absolutely necessary for the development of the plot.
BARRY ANTHONY

Prince Philip: Please switch off that thing, there's a good fellow. P. W. R. FOOT

Jack Scott: . . . and here at the London Weather Centre it's absolutely pissing down.
TED THOMPSON

Enoch Powell: These aliens certainly have a lovely sense of rhythm.
ROY KELLY

Susan Sontag: I just liked it.
PETER GRAHAM

Simon Wiesenthal: Let bygones be bygones.
Harold Pinter: I can explain everything.
PAUL PASTOR

Mrs Thatcher: Well, of course, we all dabbled in Communism in those days.
David Attenborough: Yuck!
TOM DONNELLY

Graham Greene: God – I feel happy!
PAUL PITCHCROFT

Tony Miles

Chess

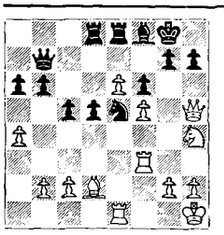
No 126 **European Junior Championship**

The latest European Junior Championship, held at Groningen, was a remarkable triumph for the host country's entrant John van der Wiel. On paper it seemed that the Russian World Champion Sergei Dolmator would win the tournament with ease.

Incidentally, it is interesting to note that the Russians have recently been sending only their top players to the prestigious World and European championships, and not giving their second strings a chance. Thus the 1977 World Junior Champion Jusupov defended his title (unsuccessfully) the following year, and here the current champion is sent to the European championship. However, van der Wiel had other ideas. After a modest start of 3/5 he unleashed an amazing run of 8 successive wins to push Dolmator into second place. The feat is even more remarkable when one considers that the winning score in recent years has been in the region of 9 to 10/13.

The English representative Jim Plaskett also had a good tournament, taking third prize, with 9 points and also picking up the brilliancy prize for the following spectacular effort.

White: J. Plaskett **Black: W. Hawelko (Poland)**
1.P-K4, P-KN3; 2.P-Q4, B-N2; 3.N-QB3, P-Q3; 4.P-B4, P-QR3!? 5.N-B3, P-QN4; 6.P-QR4, P-N5; 7.N-R2, B-N2; 8.B-Q3, P-QR4; 9.0-0, N-Q2; 10.Q-K2, P-Q4? Completely antipositional. White's reply kills both Black bishops. 10 . . . P-QB4 was the correct way to nibble at the White centre. **11.P-K5, P-K3; 12.P-N4.** With Black's king in the centre and his development neglected this thrust is fully justified. **12 . . . P-QB4; 13.PxP, P-R4; 14.P-B5! RPxP; 15.PxKP, PxN; 16.RxP! NxKP; 17.B-N5ch, K-K2;** or 17 . . . K-B1; 18.QxN! BxQ; 19.RxP mate. **18. B-N5ch, P-B3; 19.QxN, R-R4; 20.B-Q7!** A beautiful move, the point of White's play. Now . . . RxBch is answered by 21.QxR, PxQ; 22.R-B7 mate. Black's position collapses. **20 . . . R-QR3; 21.R(1)-KB1, Q-KB1; 22.P-R4, RxBch; 23.PxR, PxQ; 24.RxQ, N-B3;** Or . . . BxQ; 25.R-B7ch wins everything. **25.PxNch, KxR; 26.P-K7ch Resigns.**



Problem 126
White to play. How should the game go? Answers to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than 10 April

Solution to Problem 124

Yes, by 1.P-B3! KxR; 2.P-B4! P-N6; (K-R6, P-B5) 3.P-R3! (Not 3.PxPch, K-N5! and P-R5) KxP; (or . . . P-N7; 4.K-R2!) 4.B-B5 and wins.

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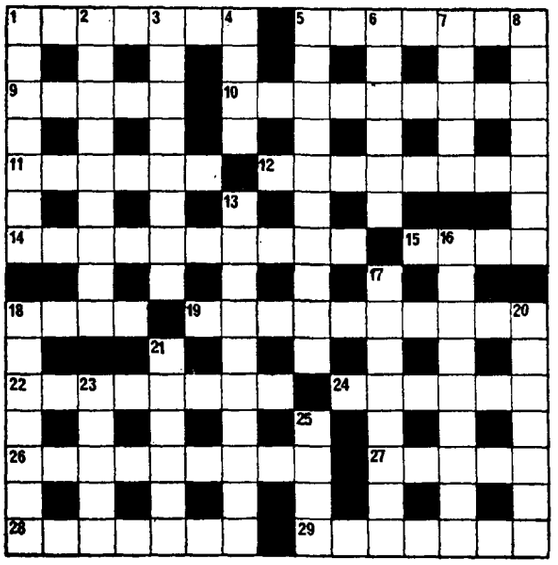
Weekend Crossword 1297

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. *Entries to Crossword 1297, New Statesman, Great* Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 9 April.



ACROSS

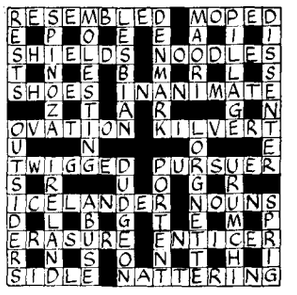
1 Sixpenny play is rendered insipidly (7).
5 The opposite of absurd way of possessing a woman (7).
9 Plays about birds (5).
10 Two animals would show that Richard had lost the East (9).
11 Is of service when a verse is not fit (6).
12 Gives the job and, with father's backing, is possibly in post (8).
14 No Western leader not present throughout (10).
15 Heed the playwright (4).
18 Letter for a little thing (4).
19 *Villains improperly* scorn duels (10).
22 Painting like a hat in a seat (8).
24 One who reserves the name of a prize (6).
26 Collecting for a woman held in detention (9).
27 Go on foot and catch about a thousand (5).
28 Kind of punishment for people in the wrong (7).
29 One's rest is disturbed by a shot from a crook (7).

DOWN

1 Wrongly give about everything up for a place (7).
2 Bird found in a park with tree (9).
3 Shows a theatrical piece in town (8).
4 You will shout (4).
5 Flourishing when magician is set up over us (10).
6 Boorish louts so love their food being brought up (6).
7 Discover there is a pound to get by working (5).
8 Stays if made to fulfil requirements (7).
13 Place to stop and verify an item? (10).
16 What the scrum has to do for a meal (9).
17 Daily rot edited skilfully (8).
18 Power of understanding which shows a thing is different (7).
20 One who saves with difficulty needs spare credit (7).
21 Plan for the two of us following science (6).
23 The palm pointlessly turns up as oil (5).
25 Times when Germany's leader is seen in rising water (4).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1296



Prizewinners to No 1296
Helen Barnard (London E10)
James Dennett (Crawley)
Daniel Tomkins (Avon, Conn.)

APPOINTMENTS

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI — CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

Applications are invited for the post of LECTURER IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION. Applicants should have a Master's degree in Public Administration or Political Science. A higher degree, teaching and research or civil service experience in Africa or a developing country will be an advantage. The appointee will be required to have competence to teach organisation and management theories covering decision making, policy studies and personnel administration. Candidates having competence in the Comparative Public Administration, development administration, local administration and public enterprise will also be considered. Applicants must indicate their fields of interest and competence. Salary scale: Lecturer K3,500-6,600 p.a. (£1 sterling = K1.65). The British Government may supplement salary in range £3,450-3,654 p.a. (sterling) for married appointee or £2,340-£2,544 p.a. (sterling) for single appointee (reviewed annually and normally free of all tax) and provide children's education allowances and holiday visit passages. If no British Government supplement is available, the University may pay an addition of between K1,320-K1,656 p.a. (taxable in Malawi). Family passages; superannuation scheme; Gratuity 15%-25%; biennial overseas leave: housing and various allowances. Detailed applications (2 copies) with curriculum vitae and naming three referees to be sent to Registrar, University of Malawi, PO Box 278, Zomba, Malawi by 5 May 1979. Applicants resident in UK should send one copy to *Inter-University Council*, 90/91 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 0DT. Further details may be obtained from either address.

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Salary £8,000 p.a.

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Applications are invited for a Chair of Modern History in the Faculty of Humanities which has become vacant owing to the death of Professor R. T. Anstey. Applicants should have interests in the period since 1700 and in the history of any area except Britain.

Further particulars of the post may be obtained from the Senior Assistant Registrar, Faculty of Humanities, The Registry, The University, Canterbury, Kent, by whom completed applications should be received not later than 27 April 1979, quoting reference A.22/79.

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Applications are invited for the following posts in the College of Economic and Social Studies:

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with special interest in Africa/Middle East/Third World

Salary scales: Professor £S5,460 p.a., Associate Professor £S4,030-£S4,550 p.a., Lecturer £S1,500-£S3,500 p.a. (excluding cost of living allowance). (£S1 = £1.23 sterling). The British Government may supplement salaries in range £3,894-£4,542 p.a. (sterling) for married appointees or £1,830-£2,310 p.a. (sterling) for single appointees (reviewed annually and normally free of all tax) and provide children's education allowances and holiday visit passages. Family passages, various allowances; superannuation scheme; annual overseas leave. Detailed applications (2 copies), including a curriculum vitae and naming 3 referees, should be sent by airmail to the Vice-Chancellor, University of Juba, P.O. Box 82, Juba, Sudan, by 7 May 1979. Applicants resident in the UK should also send 1 copy to Inter-University Council, 90-91 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 0DT. Further particulars may be obtained from either address.

UNIVERSITY OF KENT AT CANTERBURY

ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

(Keeper of Printed Books in the Cathedral Library, Canterbury)
Applications are invited for this new post which has been established following an agreement between the University and the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral to make the Cathedral's Library more accessible to scholars. This post will carry the title Keeper of Printed Books in the Cathedral Library.
Candidates should be graduates and have several years of professional experience of work in an academic Library. An interest in and knowledge of rare books will be an advantage.
Initial salary will be at an appropriate point of the scale IIA for senior library staff (£3,883-£7,754) (under review) depending on qualifications and experience. Further particulars and application forms, returnable by 30 April 1979, are obtainable from the Librarian, The Library, The University, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NZ, quoting ref. L7915.

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC STUDIES
TEMPORARY LECTURESHIP IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Applications are invited for a Temporary Lectureship in the Department of International Economic Studies, for one year only, commencing on 1 August 1979, or as soon as possible thereafter. Applicants should have specialised in the field of economic development and should have teaching and research experience in this subject area.

Salary will be within the range £3,883-£5,604 of the Lecturers' scale £3,883-£7,754 (interim), with placement according to qualifications and experience.

Further particulars may be obtained from the Secretary of the University Court (Room 18), University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ, with whom applications (8 copies), giving the names and addresses of three referees, should be lodged on or before 17 April 1979.

In reply please quote Ref. No. 4407V.

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL

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Applications are invited for the post of

SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW

in the SSRC Research Unit on Ethnic Relations at the University of ASTON in Birmingham. This is a Range III appointment; salary scale £7,506-£9,263 and the post will be filled as soon as possible after 1 July. The successful candidate will be required to develop new research programmes in the area of Race and the Inner City and Race and Employment.

Application forms and further details can be obtained from Mrs Angela Emery, SSRC Research Unit on Ethnic Relations, 8 Priory Road, Bristol BS8 1SZ. Tel: Bristol 311296.

Closing date: 22 April 1979.

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University of London

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Candidates should have good shorthand and typing speeds and an ability to work with initiative and enthusiasm. A part-time secretary is also employed to assist in the work. 35 hour week during term time only. Salary scale rises to £4,801 per annum inclusive of £502 London Allowance and Supplement.

Applications, giving full details, to the President, Students' Union, Chelsea College, University of London, Manresa Road, London SW3 6LX, or for more details phone 01-351 1689.

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oxford polytechnic

Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Estate Management
Department of Town Planning

Lecturer II or Senior Lecturer in Planning (Social Policy and Planning)

(Lecturer II £4,101 to £6,558, Senior Lecturer £6,501-(bar)-£7,572)

Candidates should have a degree in Sociology, social administration or another appropriate qualification and should have relevant practical or research experience in policy fields such as housing, employment, social services or inner city problems.

Applications, including a curriculum vitae and the names of three referees, should be sent to the **Head of the Department of Town Planning, Oxford Polytechnic, Oxford OX3 0BP**, by 1 May 1979, from whom further particulars and application forms may be obtained.

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Under the guidance of the Area Director, the main task will be to establish and support groups of voluntary helpers engaged in a variety of fund-raising activities with the emphasis on gift shops promotion.

It is a demanding, full-time job requiring skill in communicating with staff and volunteers, the ability to speak in public and cope with committee work, office management and budgetary controls.

Candidates must be experienced car drivers and possess a clean driving licence.

For further details and application form, write to: **Personnel Department, OXFAM, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ** quoting reference NS/61.

The Queen's University of Belfast

Chair of Political Science

Applications are invited for the Chair of Political Science which will become vacant on 1 October 1979 on the retirement of Professor R. J. Lawrence. The salary is £10,575 per annum (under review) with contributory pension rights under FSSU or USS.

Further particulars may be obtained from: the **Personnel Officer, The Queen's University of Belfast BT7 1NN, Northern Ireland.** Closing date: 11 May 1979. (Please quote Ref. 79/NS).

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
BRITISH SECTION

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Following the move of our present Director in May, the British Section of Amnesty International is looking for a new Director to lead its campaign into the eighties. Salary: NALGO Scale PO1 (£6,162-£7,665). Further details and application forms for this important post may be obtained from:

The Chairman, Amnesty International, British Section, Tower House, 8-14 Southampton Street, London WC2E 7HF, to whom completed applications should be sent by **21 April 1979.**

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We also have a specific vacancy for a Researcher to work on network drama productions.

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458 **Benedict Nightingale:** Theatre 1

458 **Charles Fox:** Theatre 2

459 **Weekend Competition**

459 **Chess**

460 **Crossword**

Poem by Kingsley Amis

LATE DELIVERY

We apologise to subscribers who may be experiencing delays in delivery of their NEW STATESMAN. This is due to an industrial dispute involving Post Office workers in the London area.

Theatres

ALDWYCH THEATRE (Royal Shakespeare Company). Box Office open 10-6. Now bkg for new season from 9 Apr. 'Love's Labour's Lost', 'The Taming of the Shrew'. New production Bulgakov's 'The White Guard'. Warehouse season also bkg Howard Brenton's 'The Churchill Play', premiere Tom McGrath's 'The Innocent' (The Merchant of Venice' sold out).

ARTS THEATRE. 836 3334

Worth queuing for from breakfast time, Financial Times.

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Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London WC2,

presented by the Musicians' Union and the Labour Party,
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Jack Parnell Orchestra with Guest Conductor

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ROGER DE COURCY

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Obtainable from 1 April from:
The Box Office, Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London WC2.

HAMPSTEAD THEATRE. 722 9301. Swiss Cottage Centre. NW3. John Byrne's 'Normal Service'. 'A complete success, very funny & very human' F.T. 'A gem of a play' E. News. Mon.-Sat. 8 p.m. Sat. mat. 5 p.m.

NATIONAL THEATRE. 928 2252. 'Strife', 'The Double Dealer', 'The Fruits of Enlightenment', 'Close of Play', 'Lark Rise'. See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 928 2256.

ROYAL COURT. 730 1745. Evgs. 8.0. Sats. 4.30 & 8.30. Joint Stock Theatre Co. in 'Cloud Nine' by Caryl Churchill.

TOWER. Canonbury Place, N1. Sandy Wilson's musical 'Divorce Me, Darling!' tonight, tomorrow, Sun., next Tues.-Sat. at 7.30 (mats tomorrow, 7 April at 3). Booking 226 5111 (Mon. 6.30-8, Tues.-Sat. 2.15-8).

Cinema

SCREEN ON THE HILL 435 3366 (opp. Belsize Park Tube). 'Remember My Name' (AA). 3.45. 5.30. 7.15, 9.15.

Meetings

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY. Sunday Meetings in April. 11 a.m. Visitors welcome. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. 1st, Robert Waller: 'What Do We Mean by Love'; 8th, James Hemming: 'Jesus Re-evaluated'; 22nd, Richard Holme: 'Values and Constitutional Reform'; 29th, Sir Herman Bondi: 'Energy'; 6 April, Harold Blackham: 'Fables'. Adm. free.

CENTRAL LONDON FABIAN SOCIETY. Brian Gould MP on 'Direct Elections to Europe'. Wed. 4 Apr. 7.30 p.m. 5 Tavistock Place, London WC1. Everyone welcome.

CHINA AT WORK. A day-school with talks, slides and films. At the Mary Ward Centre, 9 Tavistock Place, WC1. Saturday 31 March, 10-4. Fee: £2.

ADLERIAN SOCIETY. 'The Use of Individual Psychology in the assessment of Speech and Language Problems' (informal talk with discussion). Elizabeth Smith, speech therapist. Tues. 3 April 7.30 p.m. Community Rooms, Millman St (East Side), WC1. Visitors welcome 50p (students 25p).

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for pamphlets, book list, programme of activities. Public Talk Sun. 1 April 8 p.m. 'What is True Occultism? ULT, 62 Queen's Gdns, London W2.

Courses

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FICTION & POLITICAL ACTION. Short Course 4-5 May incl. speakers and films on how the novelist uses political themes, anarchist aspects of revolution in fiction, spy thrillers versus political reality. Speakers incl. Mervyn Jones, Nicolas Walter, Bruce Merry. Apply now to The Secretary, Short Courses, The Polytechnic of North London, School of Librarianship, 207-225 Essex Road, London N1.

More courses on page 463

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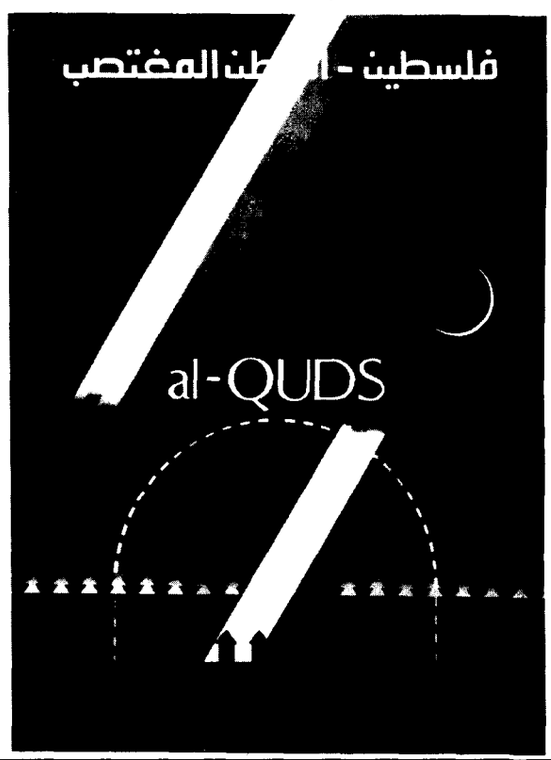

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